

THE SLOVAK QUESTION

A Memorandum submitted by the Slovak Council
to Congress of the United States of America

GENEVA
PUBLISHED BY THE SLOVAK COUNCIL
MCMXL

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“Cunning is not wisdom ; prevarication is not policy ; and
(novel as the notion is, it is equally true) armies are not strength.”

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

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Introduction

"A time comes when the evils of submission are obviously greater than those of resistance, when fear itself begets a sort of courage, when a convulsive burst of popular rage and despair warns tyrants not to presume too far on the patience of mankind."

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY,
Essay on Warren Hastings.

WHEN the hypothetical notion of a Czechoslovak race, which had been both extensive and mischievous in its operation, was at last exploded by the irresistible force of circumstances, it was generally believed that Bohemia and Slovakia would be reconstructed on sound and durable lines. There was reason to hope that the Slovaks would recover their freedom and independence. Unfortunately, this hope has been disappointed.

In March, 1939, Slovakia became a nominally independent State; but at the same time Germany tricked the Slovak rulers into assuming such obligations as rendered the vaunted benefit of independence quite illusory. Moreover, the government of Slovakia fell into the hands of unprincipled adventurers, who had no scruples about accepting German money in recompense for the odious service of imposing upon the Slovak people a political system alien from the national temper and tradition.

The Slovaks know why these adventurers are sacrificing the vital interests of Slovakia to the arbitrary ambitions of Germany. But they are at present powerless to save their country, where no one dare protest openly against fraud and violence unless he is prepared to risk the loss of his life and the confiscation of his property. The concentration camp at Ilava, the German *Gestapo*, and the terror detachments of the infamous Hlinka Guards, have forcibly silenced the voice of conscience and honour.



SLOVAKIA, showing its geographical situation in South-Eastern Europe. It occupies the northern section of the Carpathians, which enclose the Hungarian Plain. Before March, 1939, it was united with the Bohemian territories, which lie to the north-west and are surrounded by the Sudeten mountains.

The Slovak question deserves to be considered from a wider political aspect. Slovakia occupies an important strategic position in Central Europe: it has even been said that whoever rules Slovakia is master of the Danubian Basin. Current events in Slovakia should therefore be studied with the closest attention.

The fate of the Slovaks has always been decided by others than the Slovaks themselves. The right of a nation to determine its own polity has been denied to them, who have had no opportunity of solving their own constitutional problems or of choosing the State to which they wish to owe formal allegiance. No serious attempt to consult their wishes was made either at the Peace Conference at Versailles in 1919 or at the Four-Power Conference at Munich in 1938. They had no option but to resign themselves to their fate.

The Czechs Kramář and Beneš at Versailles, and the Czech Chvalkovsky at Munich, were supposed to represent Slovak interests. On both occasions only the Czech—or the fictitious Czechoslovak—nation and its interests were mentioned: the Slovak nation was totally ignored. Even the Vienna arbitral award, which followed the Munich Agreement, only regulated the question of the Magyar minority in Czechoslovakia. Again no mention was made of Slovak rights.

A careful examination of the circumstances attending the creation of the nominally independent Slovak State, proclaimed on 14 March, 1939, discloses the indisputable fact that the relevant resolution passed by the Slovak Parliament was not the true expression of opinion of that body, which, taken by surprise and frightened into submission, voted at the command of Germany. The intimidated Slovak deputies so far forgot their responsibilities as to pass a resolution, pregnant with momentous consequences,

of which they had had no previous notice and which neither in form nor in substance expressed their opinion, let alone that of the Slovak people. The tyranny of the Slovak one-party system has effectually silenced public opinion and the Press. Slovak patriots are condemned either to the brutalities of the concentration camp or to unbroken silence and retirement from public life unless they choose to eat the bitter bread of the refugee.

Today the Slovak Council is the official mouth-piece of the Slovak nation. Its immediate concern is to draw public attention to the present plight of the oppressed Slovaks. It entreats all free peoples strenuously to support the Slovaks in their struggle for justice and effectually to promote the solution of the Slovak question in the interest of European peace. Their fervent hope is to recover their freedom and independence. Zealous for their ancient rights and liberties, they dread the very thought of being a prey to foreign exploitation or a tool in the hands of a foreign Power. Their hopes and fears are entirely reasonable: let no effort be spared in helping them to realize the hopes and to dispel the fears.

"Power and office," Smollett observed in the dedication of his *History of England* to the elder Pitt, "are adventitious and transitory. They are often vested in the wicked and the worthless." It is a consolation to reflect on the transitoriness of the power now vested in the tyrant that holds Slovakia, Bohemia, and Poland, under his absolute dominion. It is a relief to turn from the contemplation of their sufferings to the perusal of a beautiful poem by the seventeenth-century Polish humanist, Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski. The sorrow and indignation felt at the hideous spectacle of inhumanity and oppression are mitigated by the consoling charm of his *Ode*, inscribed to

Pope Urban VIII, on the departure of the Thracian forces from Pannonia :

Iam minae saevi cecidere belli:
Iam profanatis male pulsa terris
Et Salus, et Pax niveis revisit
Oppida bigis.

The mind conceives a vision of the time when the nations will be disburdened of the crushing affliction of war; when Peace, long banished from the unhallowed earth, will return in her tender purity; and when, in company with the countless exiles driven forth by the oppressor, the exile Justice, "our fathers' pure and golden rule," will return in her adamant strength:

Aurei patrum niveique mores,
Exsul et sera procul usque Thule,
Candor, et pulchro remeare Virtus
Audet Olympo.

THE SLOVAK COUNCIL.

Geneva, April, 1940.

I

A Short Historical Review

THE PERIOD PRIOR TO THE MAGYAR SETTLEMENT

"Surely, as there are *Mountebanques* for the Naturall Body: so are there *Mountebanques* for the Politique Body: Men that vndertake great Cures; And perhaps haue been Lucky, in two or three Experiments, but want the Grounds of Science; And therefore cannot hold out. Nay you shall see a *Bold Fellow*, many times, doe *Mahomets* Miracle. *Mahomet* made the People beleeeue, that he would call an Hill to him; And from the Top of it, offer vp his Praiers, for the Obseruers of his Law. The People assembled; *Mahomet* cald the Hill to come to him, againe, and againe; And when the Hill stood still, he was neuer a whit abashed, but said; *If the Hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet wil go to the hil.*"

FRANCIS BACON,
Essayes, 'Of Boldnesse.'

THE earliest ancestors of the present Slovak nation of whose existence there is any historical record were the Slav—mostly ancient Slovene—tribes that, probably at the time of the migration of the peoples and during the following centuries, settled in scattered groups in the Danubian Basin enclosed by the Carpathians—that is, in the territory of historical Hungary.

Those tribes that settled in the territory now covered by Slovakia—that is, in the Northern Carpathians and on the hills and in the valleys running south from them—gradually absorbed fresh settlers: Bulgarians, Poles, Ruthenians, and Czecho-Moravian Slavs, who later merged with the immigrant Magyars. The Slovaks of today are a product of this welter of nationalities.

The political and social organization of these tribes was very primitive. The earliest recorded State was constituted at the beginning of the ninth century by the Slovak chief *Pribina* in the territory now covered by West Slovakia, and had Nitra for

its capital. Pribina was a vassal of the Frankish kings. His power was, however, short-lived; for another vassal of the Frankish kings—Mojmir, a Moravian chief—drove him into exile. Pribina later received as compensation from the Franks a smaller dominion in Pannonia, while Mojmir annexed West Slovakia and the Nitra region to Moravia.

Mojmir's successors, Ratislav and Svatopluk, extended their dominion westward, absorbing some of the Czech tribes. The ambitious Svatopluk succeeded in making his State for a short time independent of the Holy Roman Empire. It then received the sounding name of Great Moravian Empire. When it was distracted by internal dissension under the rule of Svatopluk's sons, the Czech tribes were the first to break away and submit to the Emperor. The other parts of the Great Moravian Empire—Moravia and the Nitra region—came under Hungarian rule after the settlement of the Magyars in Hungary at the end of the ninth century. At the end of the tenth century Moravia finally broke away from Hungary; but the Nitra region continued to form an integral part of that State.

There is no truth in the assertion of Czech historians that in the second half of the tenth century West Slovakia was for a short time reunited with the territories ruled by the Czech chiefs. It is, however, certain that at the death of St. Stephen, the first King of Hungary, in 1038 the entire territory now covered by Slovakia formed part of the kingdom of Hungary.

FROM THE MAGYAR SETTLEMENT TO THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

After the occupation of Hungary by the Magyars, Bohemia, the country of the Czechs, which did not become a kingdom till the end of the twelfth century, remained a tributary of Germany and succeeded in

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regaining comparative independence only for various short periods.

Thus the history of Bohemia and Moravia is closely connected with that of the Holy Roman Empire, whereas the history of Slovakia from the tenth century to the signing of the Treaty of Trianon (1919)—that is, for more than a thousand years—runs parallel with that of Hungary.

Though the Magyars conquered their country by force of arms, they treated the Slav settlers with commendable generosity. Their conduct may be attributed to the wisdom of the King, St. Stephen, who solved the political and social problems of his realm in so prudent and enlightened a manner that those of race and language never arose either in his reign or for the next six or seven hundred years.

The conquering Magyar tribes settled chiefly in the plains and the adjacent hills. The woody and mountainous regions of present-day Slovakia, which were then either uninhabited or sparsely inhabited, were divided into zones for frontier defence. This duty was performed by Hungarian marchmen, who at a later period received patents of nobility, and for many centuries preserved the physical characteristics that distinguished them from the Slovaks. The headquarters of these frontier defence units became the administrative capitals of the counties created later. The counties of Trenčín, Zvolen, Liptov, Turisc, and Orava, were created and colonized in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.

The Magyar settlements in Spiš and Saris were of like origin, and the distinctive Magyar character is even more deeply impressed on those counties than on some of the northern and western counties of Upper Hungary. Place-names and patronymics are of pure Magyar derivation.

It is clear that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Slovakia was thickly populated by Magyars

even in those regions that later became entirely Slav. But the Magyars did not confine themselves to military service; they also introduced agriculture and organized the administrative system that, subject to certain modifications, has remained in use throughout Hungary to the present day. In the following centuries the exploitation of rich fields of ore discovered in those regions, the clearing of vast forests, and the development of agricultural land, necessitated a further immigration of Slav and German settlers.

The numerous Slavonic dialects became merged only after the Slav tribes had fixed their seat on Hungarian soil. They produced three main linguistic groups:

(1) The Middle Slovak dialect, which is comparatively the purest and least affected by foreign influences. It was the foundation of the literary Slovak language developed in the nineteenth century:

(2) The Western Slovak dialect, which has an admixture of Czecho-Moravian elements:

(3) The Eastern Slovak dialects, spoken in the districts of East Saris, Spiš, Zemplin, and Košice, which differ considerably from the dialects of groups (1) and (2), and have developed into a distinct language under the influence of other Slavonic languages, particularly Polish and Ruthenian.

Upper Hungary—present-day Slovakia—never formed a separate and independent unit within the Hungarian State. It was divided into counties, and its system of administration in the fifteenth century took the form that it retained till the twentieth.

Having routed the Hungarians under Louis II* at Mohács on 29 August, 1526, the Turks occupied

* Louis II [Jagellon] (1506-1526), King of Hungary and Bohemia, the only son of Vladislaus II [Jagellon] (1456-1516), King of Hungary and Bohemia.

the Great Plain and a part of Transdanubia, and Transylvania declared itself an independent principality. As a result, Upper Hungary became the focus of Hungarian political, social, and cultural life.

The wars and disturbances accompanying the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation: the expulsion, on the principle of *cuius regio eius religio*, of Hungarians of the reformed faith and the substitution of Slovak Catholics: the final return of the Hungarians to the Great Plain after the Turkish occupation: all these events destroyed so large a part of the Magyar population of Upper Hungary, that there were fewer Magyars there in the eighteenth century than before the Turkish occupation. Such changes were felt most in the eastern parts of Slovakia, in the counties of Saris, Abauj-Torna, and Zemplin.

At that time peace prevailed among the various nationalities in Hungary. The sons of noble Magyar families took a keen interest in the study of Slovak literature, and the loyalty of the Slovak and Ruthenian peoples to their adoptive country was proverbial. Latin, regularly used by the upper classes, was the official language: its use effectually prevented disputes on the sore and punctilious question of nationality.

The Slovak and Ruthenian peasants took part in the insurrection of Francis Rákóczi II* against the Habsburgs in 1703-1711 and in the Hungarian war of independence in 1848 as enthusiastically as the Magyar nobility and the German townspeople of Upper Hungary.

* Francis II [Rákóczi] (1676-1735), Prince of Transylvania.

Though the Jagellons* late in the fifteenth century and the Habsburgs† early in the sixteenth both acquired the Crown of Bohemia and that of Hungary, there were no legal ties binding Bohemia to Hungary in consequence of this dynastic union. After the battle of the White Mountain in 1621 Bohemia completely lost its independence, whereas Hungary retained its internal autonomy within the Habsburg dominions. Though there were no political or administrative ties between the two communities, certain cultural ties were established by the Czech Protestant refugees who made their homes in Upper Hungary. Meanwhile the Slovaks, Magyars, Germans, and Ruthenians, living in Upper Hungary were on the friendliest terms with each other.

The problem of the nationalities in its present acute form arose in Hungary only at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as a result of the teachings of eighteenth-century German and French philosophers.

THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a strong Czech influence began to exert itself among the Slovak intellectuals living in the western part of Upper Hungary, in the counties of Presporok, Nitra, and Trenčín. Those of the Lutheran faith were peculiarly susceptible to this disruptive influence; for the language of the Slovak Lutheran Church was the ancient Czech language of the Kralitz version (1579-1593) of the Bible.‡

* Vladislaus (1456-1516), the fourth son of the Jagellon Casimir IV (1424-1492), King of Poland, was elected King of Bohemia in 1471 and King of Hungary in 1490.

† Ferdinand of Habsburg (1503-1564), Archduke of Austria, was elected King of Bohemia in October, 1526, King of Hungary in December, 1526, and Holy Roman Emperor on 14 March, 1558.

‡ Translated from the Vulgate for the use of the Bohemian Brethren by Mikuláš Albert z Kaménka, Lukáš Helic, Jan Eneás, Izaiáš Caepola, Jiří Streyer or Vetter, Jan Efraim, Pavel Jessenius, and Jan Kapyto.

The Court of Vienna foolishly encouraged these intellectuals in their inordinate ambitions, and in 1848, during the Hungarian struggle for independence, tried to organize an insurrection of the Slovaks of Upper Hungary against the Hungarian government. Joseph Miloslav Hurban, a cunning Slovak priest prone to intrigue, took a discreditable part in the adventure. The attempt failed; for the Slovak peasants were averse from rising against the government of Kossuth, who gave them many social advantages in spite of his propensity to centralization, derived from the doctrines of the French Revolution, in dealing with the demands of the nationalities.

Another group of Slovak Lutheran intellectuals, under the leadership of Štur and Hodža, opposed Czech influence and raised the Middle Slovak dialect, which differs considerably from Czech, to the rank of a literary language.

At the first Slav congress held in Prague in 1848 Štur expressly declared that the Slovaks did not wish to be separated politically from the Hungarian State. He was bitterly attacked by the Czechs for this declaration.

At Kremsier in 1849 Francis Palacký, the political historian of the Czechs, prepared the draft of a constitution by which Austria was to be organized into a confederation of eight provinces, one comprising the historical Bohemian territories and the territory of Slovakia. This plan found no favour with the Slovaks of Upper Hungary. At length Palacký himself relinquished it and returned to the argument of the historical rights of the Czechs.

In 1849, after the defeat of the Hungarians in their struggle for freedom, the Court of Vienna ceased fomenting dissatisfaction among the various nationalities in Hungary and initiated the Germanizing policy of the Bach period. The Czech officials

of the Bach system made themselves thoroughly obnoxious to the Slovaks of Upper Hungary.

At Turč. Sv. Martin* in June, 1861, the Slovak nationalists drew up a memorandum in which they demanded the creation of a separate Slovak administrative district within the Hungarian—not the Austrian—State.

After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, it seemed as if the Slovak national movement had spent its force. It was only in matters of education that trouble arose. This was due to the want of tact and of understanding for the wishes of the nationalities exhibited by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in carrying the school laws into effect. Care must be taken that such mistakes are not repeated in the future.

The closing in 1875 of the Slovak Cultural Association, the Matica Slovenská, at Turč. Sv. Martin caused some uneasiness among the Slovak intellectuals. It is only fair to state that the blame attached not so much to the Hungarian authorities concerned as to those Panslav zealots who sought to place the Slovak Cultural Association at the service of politicians with Panslav aims.

Andrew Hlinka initiated his political movement about 1900. Its primary aim was to awaken national consciousness in the Slovak Catholic masses and to promote their political unity. It was never hostile to the Hungarian State as such. It enabled Slovak Catholic priests fond of politics to gratify their political propensities.

Political unrest found vent in the regrettable incident at Csernova in 1907, when the gendarmes fired on the crowd, killing several Slovak peasants. It should, however, be remembered that this incident had no real political background: it was primarily

* Turčiansky Svätý Martin.

due to the futile collision of impulsive and resentful peasants with the ecclesiastical authorities. The villagers had been urged by Hlinka to protest against Bishop Parvy's direction that the new church at Csernova should be consecrated by the priest of one of the neighbouring parishes, and not by Hlinka himself, who had been suspended from his parochial functions. Obeying the ill-considered order given by a local official, the gendarmes fired on the protesting villagers. This blunder, artfully magnified into a crime by the Czechs, served to inflame Czech propaganda against Hungary and the Hungarians. There is no occasion to invent disingenuous excuses for a grave error of judgement committed by a minor Hungarian official who lost his head in an emergency. The Hungarians themselves, quick to acknowledge their errors, would be the last to defend his conduct. On the other hand, the Czechs were not justified in magnifying a venial error into an atrocious crime for the purpose of playing off the Slovaks against the Hungarians.

The shooting at Csernova was the only instance of an armed conflict between the Slovaks and the Hungarian authorities in all the thousand years of their political association. On the other hand, armed conflicts between the Slovaks and the Czech authorities were of daily occurrence, and meetings of Slovak autonomists invariably produced serious disturbances, in the brief interval of twenty years between the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic by Professor Masaryk and its destruction at the command of Herr Hitler.

With few and unimportant exceptions the Slovaks, turning a deaf ear to the vociferous Czech and Czechoslovak propaganda poured forth by the Hlasists during the Great War, remained loyal to their adoptive country, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Magyar soldiers. The present leaders

of Slovakia, acting on the orders of the same infamous tyrant that destroyed the Czechoslovak Republic in flagrant violation of the pledges given at Munich, are evidently prone to forget the lessons of history and the traditions of their country.

Conscious of their common historical destiny, Slovaks and Hungarians are eager to arrange a *modus vivendi* pending a final settlement by which their legitimate rights and interests will be fully protected. This is a desire deeply rooted in the hearts of both nations, and only by following the path it indicates will both nations be brought together in one greater and happier fatherland.

II

The Creation of a Czechoslovak State and the Fiction of a Czechoslovak Nation

THE IDEA OF CZECHOSLOVAK UNITY. HLASISM AND SLOVAK POLICY

"The pride which a nation takes in exercising over other nations a blighting and withering dominion, a dominion without prudence or energy, without justice or mercy, is not a feeling entitled to much respect."

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY,
The History of England, chap. xxiv.

THE brief historical survey showed that in the past the Czechs had tried their hardest to draw the Slovaks against their will into the political and cultural orbit of Bohemia. The Slovaks strongly objected to being inveigled from their native country, where they were quite happy and contented. Language apart, they had no ties with the Czechs.

About the middle of the nineteenth century there were a few Slovak scholars and men of letters who, having been educated in Bohemia and having become thoroughly imbued with Czech sentiment, supported the fashionable Panslav movement and favoured collaboration between Czechs and Slovaks, chiefly in cultural matters. Czechoslovakism as a political principle came into being in the twentieth century. A small group of young Slovak intellectuals, the Hlasists, endeavoured to popularize it. The Czechs called it "minute work" (*drobná práce*): at that time it really was minute, not only in conception but also in its results. It made no impression at all on the Slovaks.

Till the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, Czechoslovakism was the favourite political diversion of a mere handful of Czech and Slovak intellectuals. It was little more than a harmless political game.

The Austrians, notorious for their antipathy to the Hungarians and bent on keeping them in subjection, deliberately encouraged it: the Hungarians, seeing that the Slovaks took little interest in it, wisely decided to tolerate it. But for the Great War and its consequent upheavals, it would never have acquired any serious political importance.

The tenets of Czechoslovakism were:

(a) The Czechs and the Slovaks are closely related peoples and speak kindred Slavonic languages. Before the emergence of a separate Slovak literary language, they had a common literary language. In the remote past they formed a common State called the Great Moravian Empire.

(b) Neither the Czechs nor the Slovaks are subjects of their own national States: they are the subjects of States—or, rather, a confederation of States—dominated by other nations. The Czechs groan under the yoke of the Austrians, the Slovaks under that of the Hungarians. They must unite to form an alliance against the common danger; for, if they work together, politically and culturally, and jointly seek the protection of their rights, they will stand more chance of achieving their aim. In terms of criminal law such joint action does not involve treason against the Austrian or the Hungarian State, since the two States form the Dual Monarchy or Austro-Hungarian Empire, which should properly be considered one State.

(c) Should the Austro-Hungarian Empire be dismembered and the Czech provinces regain their independence, Slovakia must be separated from the Hungarian State and annexed to the newly constituted Czech State.

(d) The best way to justify this plan would be to persuade public opinion throughout the world that Czechs and Slovaks are one nation, the Czechoslovak nation.

These tenets are manifestly fallacious; for profound differences separate the two peoples, even though they speak allied languages. Such differences could be concealed first by falsifying facts and then by persuading both peoples, particularly the Slovaks, to believe the fiction of a Czechoslovak nation and language.

It should be remembered that before the Great War only a small group of Czechs entertained this fiction, whereas the great majority of the Czech intellectuals stood for historical rights and national independence, and made no claims on Slovakia or the Slovaks. Among the Czechs Professor Thomas Masaryk and his pupils were zealous adherents and promoters of Czechoslovakism: among the Slovaks the Hlasists were its enthusiastic champions. The leading Hlasists were: Lawrence Šrobár, Anthony Štefánek, Paul Blaho, the Houdek brothers, Stephen Janský, and to some extent Milan Hodža, who later became Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia. It need hardly be said that the Hlasists were subsidized by the Czechs.

Distinguished Slovak patriots like Dula, Hurban, Mudron, Skultéty, Daxner, Makovický, Hlinka, and Juriga, refused to entertain the proposal of union with the Czechs and the fiction of a Czechoslovak nation and language. They despised the Hlasists as national traitors and political apostates, who had aggravated the guilt of their treason and apostasy by bitterly attacking the Slovak cause.

These are immutable historical facts that cannot be altered by the unscrupulous forgeries of the Czechs. Before the Great War the Slovaks themselves would not tolerate Czechoslovakism in Slovakia.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK MOVEMENT DURING THE GREAT WAR

It may reasonably be asked how the movement led by Professor Masaryk and Dr. Beneš succeeded in making headway during the Great War and finally developed into an ostensibly united Czech and Slovak struggle against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy for the establishment of a Czechoslovak State. The answer to this question is simple. The whole Czechoslovak movement in foreign countries was nothing but an ingenious fraud.

At the outset Masaryk and Beneš were the sole leaders of the movement. After a time they succeeded in winning the Czech masses over, with the result that the Czech soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy surrendered on all fronts to the forces of the Entente. Masaryk later recruited the so-called Czechoslovak legion from the ranks of these deserters, most of whom were Czechs.

The Slovaks at home were not deceived by this false and mischievous propaganda and remained loyal to their fatherland till the end of the war. Slovak prisoners of war rarely joined the Czechoslovak legion; cases occurred during the last months of the war, when the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was on the verge of collapse, and the outcome of the war seemed certain. Even at the end of the war Czechoslovak legionaries of Slovak nationality did not represent more than five per cent. of the total number, being mainly American Slovaks deceived by the false promises of Masaryk and his partisans in the Pittsburgh Convention. They were neither traitors nor deserters like the Czechs, but for the most part honest but credulous men led into error by the mean artifices of the demagogue. In any case, their participation in the movement was of little importance. It is true that General Stefánik and

Dr. Osusky were Slovaks, but they did not come from Hungary. Osusky had lived in America and Stefánik in France for a long time before the war.

Born of humble peasant stock, Osusky was led to join the movement by political ambition. He is still an adherent of Czechoslovakism and at present holds the office of Czechoslovak envoy to the French Republic.

Stefánik's case was different. He had been an astronomer in Paris, and during the war served as a lieutenant-colonel in the French Air Force. He supported the Czechoslovak movement not with a view to attaining the rank of general but because he earnestly wished to work for the good of the Slovak nation. His temporary collaboration with Masaryk and Beneš may be regarded as a political artifice or a mere error of judgement. After the war he did not return with them to the new Czechoslovakia, but remained abroad.

It is well known that from the very beginning Stefánik was at loggerheads with Masaryk and Beneš on many constitutional and political questions, particularly those that concerned Slovakia. He could never bring himself to entertain the fiction of a Czechoslovak nation and language. That was an unforgivable sin in the eyes of Masaryk and his partisans.

When at last, in May, 1919, Stefánik decided to return to his beloved Slovakia, the Slovak people eagerly awaited his arrival from Italy at the aerodrome in Presporok (Bratislava). The news that the aeroplane in which he had been travelling had been accidentally shot down just before landing by a Czechoslovak military guard was a painful shock to the Slovak people. The guard explained that, blinded by the sun, he could not recognize the nationality of the aeroplane, which he mistook for a hostile one.

The authorities having accepted this disingenuous explanation, further investigation was considered unnecessary. The sorrowing Slovaks buried their hero on the hill called Bradlo, which rises above the village where he was born and his memory is cherished with peculiar tenderness and veneration.

From that moment reconciliation between Czechs and Slovaks was out of the question. Political animosity and national antipathy grew fiercer and bitterer. Herr Hitler, inflamed with the lust of universal dominion, skilfully exploited this unhappy situation in the interest of German aggrandizement. Bohemia was annexed to the Reich in the spring of 1939.

THE PITTSBURGH CONVENTION

Czechoslovak political animosity was due to a variety of causes, moral as well as sentimental. It should be remembered that Masaryk could not have founded his Republic without the help of the American Slovaks, the Slovaks of Slovakia having refused to entertain the proposal of union with the Czechs. It is pertinent to inquire into the devices employed by Masaryk for the purpose of winning the goodwill and help of the American Slovaks.

It should be mentioned that nearly a million Slovaks were living in the United States of America before the Great War. Their number now exceeds a million; for after the war a further 300,000 emigrated from the Czechoslovak Republic to the United States and Canada. If it is remembered that today 2,300,000 Slovaks are living in Slovakia, and about 600,000 or 700,000 in other European countries, chiefly Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Germany, it follows that the Slovaks in the United States amount to about one quarter of the entire Slovak nation. The weight of their influence in all matters of national concern bears no

proportion to their numbers; for they are economically the most independent and politically the most enlightened of all the Slovaks, and have always claimed the right to have a voice in solving the political problems of the nation.

Forming a shrewd estimate of their influence, Masaryk strove to establish political connexions between the Czech movement abroad and the leaders of the American Slovaks. At first working through the Czech leaders in the United States, where about 600,000 Czechs were living, he then got into personal touch with the Slovaks. Having paid several visits to the United States after their entry into the war, he recognized the importance of convincing leading American statesmen and politicians that the American Slovaks had given their approval and support to the so-called Czechoslovak movement. He began by making overtures to prominent members of the Slovak League: Bielek, Daxner, Mamatej, Husek, Siska, Kosik, and Ambroze.

The vigilant and sagacious Masaryk was keenly alive to the difficulty of cajoling the hard-headed American Slovaks into active support of the Czechoslovak movement; for they could not be duped with the fiction of national unity. On the other hand, he clearly saw that their support had to be procured at all costs. Having studiously ingratiated himself with them, he at length, in the spring of 1918, suggested an agreement that should give concrete expression to the terms on which, in the event of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Slovaks would be willing to collaborate with the Czechs in the formation of a united Czechoslovak State. Terms were embodied in the draft, written in Masaryk's own handwriting, of an agreement designed to regulate the constitutional position of Slovakia within the projected State.

Arrangements were finally adjusted by the so-called Pittsburgh Convention, which guaranteed the widest possible autonomy to the Slovaks. The Convention was drawn up and signed at Pittsburgh on 30 May, 1918, by the leaders of the American Czechs and Slovaks and by Masaryk, who, as the first elected President of the Czechoslovak Republic, again confirmed and acknowledged its validity with his own signature at Washington on 14 November following.

No sooner had Masaryk returned home than the Czechs, whose political consciences are too slippery to be bound even by the strictest engagements, began to work against the Slovaks and the principle of Slovak autonomy. In violation of their plighted faith they deliberately evaded their duty to the Slovaks, whose rights they had solemnly undertaken to respect. Adepts in the ignoble art of factious intrigue, they expended much malevolent ingenuity in machinations against the Slovaks, whom they were bent on depriving of those very rights which the Pittsburgh Convention expressly guaranteed to them.

It should be borne in mind that Masaryk was a zealous patriot. The zeal of the patriot, like that of the fanatic, is often polluted by the baser elements of intolerance and perversity. The fiery and intractable patriot may prove to be the worst enemy of his country: the perverse and unbending fanatic may prove to be the worst enemy of his faith. The ostentatious fervour of Hitler's patriotism may well move the mirth and pity of the world; but, ludicrous and pitiable as it is, its sincerity is unquestionable. Unfortunately, intolerance alloys this essential virtue. Intolerant of the restraints imposed by the fundamental principles of morality, he has not shrunk from perpetrating excesses so flagitious as to outrage the moral sense of mankind and to bring

Germany into violent collision with the Allied Powers. Profoundly sincere in his zeal for the glory and prosperity of the German Reich, he regards the moral principles that ordinarily restrain men from evil courses as intolerable checks upon the progress of his divinely appointed work for the aggrandizement of his country. He dismisses the accepted rules of conduct, to which the moral sanctions effectually induce obedience in all conscientious men, as obstructive forces operating to oppose his will and to frustrate his ambition. Neither the disapproval of conscience nor the fear of future punishment deters him from employing unlawful means in the pursuit of his end. Regardless of truth and of mercy, he makes no scruple to approve and encourage whatever can promote the interest of his country and to reject and destroy whatever is incompatible with the fulfilment of his mission. This explanation may perhaps give the clue to the barbarous intolerance of Nazi rule and to the flagrant mendacity and perfidy of the Nazi rulers. Hitler orders the persecution of Jews and Catholics because he regards them as obstacles to the ultimate realization of those grandiose and sweeping plans which he revolves in a mind deranged by the double insanity of paranoia and megalomania.

These reflections may conduce to a clearer understanding of Masaryk's character and conduct. A zealous patriot, he was temperamentally unfit to be the constitutional head of a State composed of populations locally intermixed but morally separated by race, language, national character, and level of civilization. The holder of such an office should combine judicial impartiality with diplomatic skill: the peculiar qualities of the judge and the mediator are essential to the proper exercise of his constitutional functions. Masaryk's duty was to allay national animosities and reconcile the hostile popula-

tions to each other. Like an impartial judge, he should have laboured to protect the rights of the populations and to redress their legitimate grievances: like a tactful mediator, he should have laboured to compose internal disputes and to restrain the excesses of those stronger elements which abused their strength and sought to domineer over the weaker by infringing their rights and despoiling them of their property.

Unfortunately, Masaryk was not qualified for the difficult and delicate work of reconciliation. He made the foolish mistake, which ultimately involved the ruin of the Czechoslovak Republic, of choosing to be rather a partisan than a mediator. A Czech patriot, he resolved that the Czechs should exercise dominion over the entire Republic and hold the other populations in subjection. This stupid policy naturally inflamed the animosity of the subject populations against the Czechs. In spite of repeated representations on the part of the American Slovaks, Masaryk declined to recognize the Pittsburgh Convention as binding on the Czechoslovak State. Though this instrument was not formally renounced, it was practically violated in at least one of its essential provisions: the granting of autonomy to the Slovaks. Fulfilment of this provision was repeatedly evaded on frivolous pretexts. In fine, the vaunted Pittsburgh Convention was destined to an inglorious fate.

It is remarkable that Masaryk handled the awkward question of the Pittsburgh Convention with something less than his wonted adroitness. An open renunciation of the instrument would have been at once more honest and more sensible than the ingenious and unconvincing subterfuges by which he sought to repudiate its legal validity. As he could not for very shame deny the authenticity of his own signature, he argued that the Convention

was invalid because it had been signed on an American national holiday, instruments signed on national holidays being invalid in the United States. Admitting this argument to be frivolous and untenable, he then pronounced the text of the Convention to be a forgery. It was not, he said, the original text that he had signed. This argument was too palpably absurd to deprive the instrument of its legal efficacy.

The last article of the Pittsburgh Convention provided that the management of details should be left to the constitutionally competent authorities in the projected Czechoslovak State. Eager to avail themselves of any convenient pretext, the Czechs argued that, since the revolutionary National Assembly had been convened in conformity with the Czechoslovak Constitution of 1920, in the drafting of which due attention had been paid to the principles of the Pittsburgh Convention, the Convention had therefore been nullified and superseded by the Constitution. This argument was a flagrant breach of faith; for the Czechs knew quite well that only the management of details had been entrusted to the constitutionally competent authorities in the Czechoslovak State. These authorities were not empowered to alter fundamental principles. This limitation applied in particular to the revolutionary National Assembly arbitrarily convened by the Czechs.

The Slovaks very properly rejected this argument. The impolitic conduct of the Czechs gave rise to the Slovak autonomist movement, which from the foundation of the Republic to its dissolution strove unremittingly for the recognition of the Pittsburgh Convention. It was the *Magna Charta* of the movement, and the failure of the Czechs to fulfil its provisions was one of the chief causes of the downfall of the Republic.

THE DECLARATION OF TURČ. SV. MARTIN

Meanwhile strange events were happening in Upper Hungary, the territory now called Slovakia. The Czechs, together with some hired Slovak agents, convened a meeting at Turč. Sv. Martin on 30 October, 1918. As the self-styled representatives of the Slovak people, they proposed to publish at the meeting a Declaration announcing the separation of the Slovaks from Hungary and their union with the new Czechoslovak Republic. They had no right to style themselves the representatives of the Slovak people. Their impudent pretension was altogether inadmissible; for they were a mere faction of 103 members, who arrogated to themselves such rights as only representatives elected on the broadest basis of popular suffrage would have been entitled to claim even in a time of political revolution.

Impatient for the Declaration of Turč. Sv. Martin, the Czechs had it drafted in conformity with their precise needs. In a time of national upheaval it is easy to talk a few vulgar and ignorant partisans into committing some political folly. The Czechs sent Milan Hodža and Samuel Zoch, a Slovak Lutheran pastor, to Turč. Sv. Martin, where it was their duty to see that the Declaration should on no account be a failure from the Czech point of view.

After a lengthy conference the declarers passed a resolution satisfactory to the Czechs. But even the declarers could not bear to think that the helpless Slovaks would be at the mercy of the Czechs in the projected Czechoslovak State. Hodža and Zoch were at pains to assure them that the Declaration was a mere formality contrived to delude the Allied negotiators at the Peace Conference into the belief that the Czechs and the Slovaks were two branches of one Czechoslovak race. Reluctant to burden

their consciences with the guilt of a pious fraud, the declarers passed the resolution subject to certain conditions.

The most important condition was that the Slovaks should send their own delegation to the Peace Conference. The express stipulation of this condition was embodied in the text of the Declaration. The second and equally important condition was that union with the Czechs should be only temporary: in fact, for a period of ten years, at the expiration of which the competent representatives of both nations should meet to discuss and settle the question of their future political relations. The express stipulation of this condition was not embodied in the text of the Declaration, but a supplementary protocol to the same effect was annexed in the presence of the principal declarers. This was the notorious secret clause.

Thus revised, the Declaration would still have been of no use to the Czechs; for the presence of a separate Slovak delegation at the Peace Conference would have confounded all their plans. It was therefore necessary that the relevant stipulation should be suppressed. Hodža and Zoch undertook to render this despicable service to the Czech cause. They falsified the text of the Declaration by omitting the relevant stipulation and making certain alterations. The Czechs used the garbled text to mislead the Allied Powers. In her spirited and stimulating book, *What Hitler wants*,* Mrs. Lorimer points out that British ignorance of the German language is convenient to the Germans. It would be true to say that Allied ignorance of the history and current problems of the Danubian Basin was at this juncture convenient to the Czechs, who had no scruples about exploiting it to their own advantage.

* *What Hitler Wants*, by E. O. Lorimer (Penguin Books).

Speaking in the British House of Commons on 27 July, 1936, Mr. Lloyd George enlarged on the formidable difficulties that had confronted the Allied negotiators at the Peace Conference. Dealing with the principle of self-determination in particular, he admitted that they had been the dupes of those whose veracity they had sincerely believed to be unimpeachable, and who had abused this generous trust by supplying them with falsified and fabricated information. "We had to adjudicate," he said, "on the statistics which were submitted to us. There was always a natural bias for the nation which fought on our side, and we were more inclined to accept their contentions than the figures of those who fought against us. I am sorry that we were not justified in that conclusion in many cases."†

It is fitting here to express the hope that at the next Peace Conference the Allied Powers will be spared the special difficulties with which they had to contend in 1919. Their war aims—the emancipation of the Poles and the Czechs from German ascendancy and the restoration of Polish and Czech national independence—cannot but meet with unreserved approval. The Czechs have committed great errors in the past. It has been painful to record some of their errors. The root of the trouble has been their ambition to play the part of a great Power, for which they are not qualified. If they had been content with less, they would have achieved more. A proper sense of their limitations might well have saved them from the cruel fate that has now overtaken them. Dean Swift's observation is as true of nations as of individuals: "It is an uncontrolled truth, that no man ever made an ill figure who understood his own talents, nor a good one who mistook them."

† *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 315, 1202.

The Czechs were often in the wrong; but it is not logical to assume that the Germans were therefore always in the right. Hitler's annexation of Bohemia, accomplished in flagrant violation of solemn engagements and in ostentatious defiance of moral authority, left a deep stain on the already sullied national honour of Germany. The conditions prevailing in Bohemia under Nazi rule were fully and objectively described in an article, entitled *Germanizing the Czechs*, that appeared in the *London Times* on 11 March, 1940. A careful perusal of the article in question should convince any decent man of the necessity for an early and complete overthrow of the present German government. It is satisfactory to note that the Allied Powers have no intention of relinquishing their declared aims. "Those," the *London Times* (11 March, 1940) justly remarks, "are the minimum aims, dictated alike by honour and security."

It is unlikely that the downfall of the Nazi government will come otherwise than as a result of severe military reverses. The military defeat of Germany is not the impossibility that Goebbels would have the world believe. The theory of the invincibility of the German army—a theory as false and mischievous as that of the Czechoslovak race—was finally exploded by Major-General Sir John Davidson in a cogently reasoned and incisively worded letter to the *London Times* (9 March, 1940). Recalling the crushing defeat of the German army in 1918, Sir John Davidson observed: "There is no parallel for such a defeat on such a scale and so complete in the whole of military history. If Germany wishes to boast, she can boast of sustaining a record defeat, and no words of her professional liars can distort that fact." Goebbels' mendacious oratory used to represent the collapse of Germany in 1918 as having been due to the wicked intrigues of Jews and Communists.

Germany, he used to repeat *ad nauseam*, had been stabbed in the back by Jews and Communists. Now he has changed his tune. Meanwhile Adolf Hitler, the pretended saviour of Europe from Communism, struck a bargain with Joseph Stalin, the instigator of mankind to universal Communism. Germany embraced her assassin.

THE SECRET CLAUSE. "VACUUM JURIS." THE TUKA CASE

The first account of the execrable fraud perpetrated by the Czechs was given to the Slovaks in a newspaper entitled *Slovenska Narodna Jednota*. Its author was Louis Bazovsky, a politician belonging to the National Slovak Party and a former member of the revolutionary Czechoslovak National Assembly. His fearless exposure infuriated the Czechs and their sycophants, who finally succeeded in getting him under lock and key.

The question of the secret clause became so embarrassing for the Czech and Slovak tamperers that they at last decided to bring a special action for libel, the object of which was to snatch a judgement in their favour. Though the majority of the witnesses declared that, to their certain knowledge, the supplementary protocol annexed to the Declaration had been drafted at Turč. Sv. Martin on 31 October, 1918, the Czech judges, basing their decision on the evidence of witnesses that had obviously been bribed, found that there had never been a supplementary protocol annexed to the Declaration and that such a protocol had never even existed. The effect of this decision was to convert a temporary arrangement between the Czechs and the Slovak declarers into a permanent and unconditional union of Bohemia with Slovakia. Shocked at this travesty of justice, the Slovaks

remained faithful to the political principles embodied in the secret clause.

Professor Béla Tuka, a representative of the Slovak People's party in the Czechoslovak National Assembly, became the recognized interpreter of Slovak political opinion. In 1928, when the time was approaching for the fulfilment of the promises made by the Czechs to the Slovaks, Tuka published in the *Slovak*, the official organ of the Slovak People's party, an article in which he stated from a purely academic point of view the legal conclusions to be drawn from the Declaration of Turč. Sv. Martin and the annexed secret clause. His article was written on the thesis that the union of the Czechs with the Slovaks in 1918 had been neither permanent nor unconditional.

The secret clause provided that the union should last for an initial period of ten years, at the expiration of which the competent representatives of both nations should confer for the purpose of deciding on what conditions they might be willing to continue their joint political existence. As the prescribed period was due to expire on 31 October, 1928, it was time for them to take a definite decision. If they could not reach agreement, or the Slovaks were unwilling to continue the existing arrangement, or the Czechs refused to acknowledge the right of the Slovaks to decide the question for themselves, the Czechoslovak State would cease to have supremacy over Slovakia, where a condition of *vacuum juris* would consequently arise. Henceforth power exercised by the Czechs in Slovakia would be tantamount to a usurpation of rights. It would therefore be necessary for the competent representatives of both nations to meet before 31 October, 1928, and draw up a new political agreement for the purpose of saving Slovakia from the imminent danger of a *vacuum juris*.

Tuka argued thus in all good faith; but the Czechs and their Slovak agents read a different meaning into his words. The Czechs and Czechoslovaks* were alarmed at the thought of a *vacuum juris*; for they apprehended that the rights they had usurped might be seriously threatened if negotiations were set on foot between the Czechs and the Slovaks with a view to preventing a condition of *vacuum juris* in Slovakia.

They therefore decided that Tuka must be removed from public life. They brought a charge of treason against him. The trial lasted for more than four months. As the charge of treason could not be proved against him, he was, on the evidence of notoriously corrupt and mendacious witnesses, convicted of military espionage and sentenced on 5 October, 1928, to fifteen years' imprisonment. This was the maximum sentence under Czechoslovak criminal law.

During the trial some members, led by Andrew Hlinka, of the Slovak People's party, half-heartedly supported Tuka, who had been their parliamentary colleague and was, strictly speaking, their agent. Other members of the party—for example, Juriga, Kubis, and Machacek—gave evidence against Tuka. The Czechs repaid them for their odious services with money and with land taken from Magyar landowners in Slovakia (so-called residue estates) and appointed them notaries public. Other members again—for example, Charles Belánsky, a retired officer and journalist, and John Farkas, manager of the printing-office of the *Slovak*—were in direct communication with the Czech police, whom they supplied with false evidence against Tuka. Belánsky

* The name given in Slovakia to persons of Slovak descent who for money supported the political interests of the Czechs against those of the Slovaks.

received money and three cinema licences: Farkas received money and a lucrative appointment.

When the trial was over, Hlinka and his partisans grew seriously apprehensive for their liberty. They began to deny their leader, at first only in private circles, but later in the public Press. Thus they gradually became the confederates of the Czechs and Czechoslovaks.

Tuka had already served ten years of his sentence when, in the autumn of 1938, the Czechoslovak Republic was shaken to its foundations by the threat of a German invasion and the enforced cession of Sudetenland to Germany. He was then released on licence. The conditions of his release were that he should acknowledge his guilt and profess his remorse and shame for his political offences. The price of his liberation was an ignominious confession and a pretended repentance. The political offender, who might be qualified by oxymoron as innocent, was required to wear the appearance of a true penitent. He was thus deliberately humiliated; and the judicial authorities exhibited a vindictive eagerness to embitter his humiliation by treating him with an insolence derogatory to the honour and dignity of their office. During his long confinement he had been frequently subjected to galling insults and indignities. His health had sunk under the rigours of prison life. The effect of all this mental and bodily suffering has been to disable him from taking the place in Slovak politics for which his knowledge and experience qualify him.

THE SLOVAK NATIONAL COUNCIL AND THE BAZOVSKY CASE

The Bazovsky case was the counterpart of the Tuka case. Even the severe sentence passed on Tuka failed to cripple or silence the Slovak autonomist movement. The Slovak People's party,

led by Andrew Hlinka, had been the guiding spirit and main strength of the movement; but the Tuka trial gave a temporary check to its activities. It was then that the other advocate of autonomy, the Slovak National party, of which the members were recruited chiefly from Lutheran Slovak circles, emerged into notice. Led by Martin Rázus, the Slovak poet, Louis Bazovsky, Milos Vanco, and others, the Slovak National party raised the standard of autonomy in 1930 and worked hard for the next few years to win Slovakia over. The party leaders fully understood the importance of securing the inestimable services that it was in the power of many loyal Slovaks to render to the good cause. They strenuously exerted all their energies for its promotion. At length, in the summer of 1933, they decided that the time had come when it was necessary to achieve the self-government for which they had waited with exemplary patience.

In the spring of 1933 Slovaks living abroad established at Geneva a Slovak Council under the direction of Francis Jehlička. Its purpose was to interest foreign countries in Slovakia and to keep them regularly and amply supplied with accurate and trustworthy information on current Slovak questions. Autonomists at home acutely felt the need of a Slovak National Council. They gave forcible and reiterated expression to this feeling. There was a lively exchange of views on the subject between the leaders of the Slovak People's party and those of the Slovak National party. The original idea was that the Slovak National Council should be a central political body at once embracing and transcending all parties. The primary object was to make such a body a faithful interpreter of the deliberate sense of the nation. It should be altogether free from the faction and intrigue that too often bring disgrace and ruin on the causes they are supposed to serve.

Characterized by unity of purpose and by freedom from factious squabbling, it would be a faithful and vigilant guardian of national interests and a wise and moderate counsellor in important and difficult conjunctures.

The Slovak politicians, however, proved themselves incapable of putting this idea into practice. Unfortunately, Rázus, the leader of the Slovak National party, was at that moment too ill to participate in the project. Moreover, the Czechs promised him substantial rewards if he would relinquish the policy he had been pursuing. The Slovak People's party had not yet recovered from the serious set-back it had suffered at the time of the Tuka trial. It was then that those leaders of the Slovak autonomist movement who were not members of the Czechoslovak National Assembly took matters in hand. On 6 August, 1933, a committee of Slovak autonomists met in a determined mood at Banská Bystrica and, under Bazovsky's chairmanship, resolved themselves into a Slovak National Council.

Powerful stimulus was given to the movement by Bazovsky's article in the *Národné Noviny*, the official organ of the Slovak National party, in which he had expressed the opinion that the Peace Treaties of 1919 were ripe for peaceful revision. Since revision would affect Czechoslovakia, it was plainly the duty of the Slovak politicians to prepare the nation for it. A Slovak National Council would have met the need of political preparation. It would have stimulated an honourable and magnanimous zeal for national independence and impressed on every loyal Slovak the conviction that, if he failed to assert his rights with energy and resolution, he would be condemned to perpetual servitude.

A series of crimes and calamities has proved the Slovak politicians to have been at once clear-sighted

and far-sighted. Could they have carried their original idea into practice, the Slovak nation might have been spared much of the suffering that it has since had to endure. The idea in question was obnoxious to the Czechs, who took effectual measures to prevent its realization. The aged Bazovsky and his associates were thrown into prison, where they were detained for fourteen months pending their trial. They were in fact never brought to trial. Before the re-organization of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1938 an amnesty was granted to political offenders. The charge on which they were indicted was that they had conspired the separation of Slovakia from Czechoslovakia by force of arms and carried on traitorous intrigues with foreign Powers in pursuance of this design.

The Czechs and Czechoslovaks used this stereotyped charge to discredit the Slovak patriots and autonomists in the eyes of their own people. The Czech authorities positively refused to investigate the grievances of the Slovak nation and to discuss the question of autonomy with its representatives. They tried also to discredit the Slovak Council at Geneva in the eyes of the Slovak people by spreading rumours to the effect that it was deeply concerned in intrigues with foreign Powers. But, having vented their spleen in these factious calumnies, they could not deny that the Council was doing excellent work.

The Slovak Council was the first body to give the Slovak question its proper status by divesting it of its local character and bringing it to the attention of judicious and impartial students of foreign affairs. This is its principal service to the Slovak nation.

Inured to disappointments and humiliations, to the inconstancy of fortune and the duplicity of mankind, the Slovaks have now learnt to distinguish their friends from their enemies. They have come

to recognize their true friends ; and this recognition could have been prevented neither by the calumnious fables of the Czechs nor by the selfish ambition of the present Slovak rulers, who have sold their country into the intolerable servitude of the Nazi tyrants. Slovakia now finds itself in a position of abject vassalage to Germany. The vigorous and pungent leading article in the London *Times* of 18 March, 1940, emphasized the plight of alien races under German domination.

" It is understood that both in Berlin and Rome German spokesmen have been busily putting out the idea that Germany's main purpose is to create ' a new order ' in Europe ; but what they have already done proclaims to the whole world that the new heaven and new earth which they envisage is meant to be a heaven for Germans and a hell for non-Germans."

It is no exaggeration to say that the present German-dominated Slovakia is a positive hell for the Slovaks. The Germans adduce a fallacious argument in defence of their policy of oppression, faithfully executed by the servile government of Tiso and his creatures : their superiority of race, they argue, entitles them to domineer unchecked over the races that they are pleased to classify as inferior. " All Injustice and Violence," the seventeenth-century Lord Halifax* acutely observed in *The Character of a Trimmer*, " must in it self be grievous, but the aggravations of supporting 'em by false Arguments, and insulting Reasons, has something in it yet more provoking than the Injuries themselves." It is interesting to find this opinion expressed by the twentieth-century Lord Halifax,† the present British Foreign Secretary, in the address—a masterpiece of pure and perspicuous eloquence—that he delivered to the

* Sir George Savile, 4th Baronet, of Thornhill, afterwards 1st Marquis of Halifax (1633-1695). See *The Complete Peerage*, Vol. vi., pp. 242-243.

† Sir Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, 5th Baronet, of Barnsley, and 3rd Viscount Halifax (b. 1881). See *The Complete Peerage*, Vol. vi., p. 250.

University of Oxford on 27 February, 1940:
 "... we are no more prepared to admit German superiority of race than we are concerned to assert our own. If that were all, it would not greatly matter, but when this doctrine is invoked in justification of the oppression of other races, it becomes a crime against humanity."[‡]

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE SLOVAK QUESTION

It has already been mentioned that the Slovaks lived in political union with the Magyars for more than a thousand years. In course of time economic and cultural connexions were established between the two nations that could not be broken without grave risk of injury to their interests and of injustice to the nations themselves. Moreover, geographical features have made the Slovak Highlands dependent on the Great Plain of Hungary, to which they are contiguous. The geographical configuration of Slovakia, the direction in which its rivers and streams flow, the evolution of its natural lines of communication, the necessary exchange of the raw produce of the Plain for the timber and other products of the Highlands: all these facts emphasize the dependence of the Slovak Highlands on the Great Plain of Hungary.

The Plain and the capital, Budapest, were dependent on the Highlands for timber, ores, and manufactured goods. On the other hand, the Highlands were dependent on the Plain for foodstuffs and on Budapest as a customer. Before the dismemberment of the ancient Kingdom of Hungary in 1919, a perfect economic balance was maintained between the Highlands and the Plain.

The Treaty of Trianon inflicted irreparable injury and loss on Slovak and Hungarian industry and

[‡] *The Times*, 28 February, 1940.

commerce. Slovakia played a decisive part not only in the economic life of the old Hungarian Highlands, but also in the economic policy of successive Hungarian governments. This policy, which aimed at industrializing the Highlands by the aid of reduced tariff rates, of increased transport facilities, and of State subsidies, effectually promoted the growth of Slovak industry and commerce. Many Slovak workers earned their living in the factories and mines of the Highlands.

Under the Czechs exactly the reverse happened: to their cost, as they themselves saw in the end. Bohemia and Moravia, as well as Silesia, had highly developed industries. The Czechs' first object was to ruin the Slovak industries, thereby not only relieving their own industries from Slovak competition, but also securing a market in Slovakia, which, reduced to industrial impotence, would then have to rely on Czech manufactures instead of Slovak ones. They succeeded for a time: from 1919 to 1925 they contrived to put nearly all the Slovak industries out of the running.

When the Czechs failed to ruin an industrial undertaking by means of official chicanery, of crushing taxation, and of exorbitant tariff rates on the Slovak railways, they bought it from the hard-pressed owner at a price much below its market value. This unscrupulous expedient was euphemistically described as nationalization. Most of the nationalized undertakings were speedily closed down: only those were kept going which manufactured articles and materials that the Czechs could not manufacture themselves.

Thus it was that in 1925, six years before the world economic crisis, Slovakia presented a grim spectacle of industrial decay. Deserted factories and unemployed workers were the visible and tangible results of Czech economic policy in Slovakia.

The world economic crisis of 1931 could hardly aggravate the already desperate situation in Slovakia, where for a long time there had been no accumulation of capital and no industrial enterprise. Poverty and squalor assumed ugly proportions. The indisputable fact that during the twenty years' existence of the Czechoslovak Republic 300,000 persons emigrated, chiefly to the United States of America, suffices to give a notion of the public distress. The population of Bohemia and Moravia united was double that of Slovakia; yet only 40,000 persons emigrated from these provinces during the same period.

Meanwhile the industries of Bohemia and Moravia flourished with remarkable vigour. Every year there were export surpluses of the value of several thousand millions. Czech capitalists invested immense sums in Bohemian industries, and their bank-deposits substantially increased. While the population of Bohemia and Moravia united had bank deposits of a total value exceeding 65,000,000,000 Czech crowns, those of the population of Slovakia and Ruthenia united amounted to only about 4,500,000,000 Czech crowns. Slovak complaints about this unsatisfactory state of affairs were invariably met with the stinging reply that the Czechs were shrewder and more efficient than the Slovaks, and therefore got on better in business. A contrast was insolently drawn between the financial acumen, technical skill, and commercial enterprise of the civilized Czechs on the one hand and the natural stupidity, rude ignorance, and incurable laziness of the primitive Slovaks on the other.

When the Slovaks complained that the Czechs had systematically ruined the Slovak industries, the Czechs twitted the Slovaks with their helplessness by asking with a sneer why they were such fools as to put up with such treatment. If any Slovak politicians dared openly to criticize the prevailing

conditions, they were denounced as enemies of the State, subjected to violent attacks in the Press, and in some cases condemned to rigorous imprisonment.

It must in fairness be stated that conditions slightly improved in Slovakia in the last years of the Republic, though they were far from being as favourable as they had been in the old Bohemian provinces. The highly industrialized character of the Republic and the centralized system of monopolies, which amounted almost to nationalization of trade in agricultural products, made it possible to maintain the price of grain, which was fixed in advance and controlled by the authorities at a fairly profitable level. Only the Magyar peasants and the Czech settlers in the flat regions of southern Slovakia benefited by this circumstance; for the majority of Slovaks in the mountainous regions rarely had any surplus agricultural products to dispose of.

In the last years of the Republic, when they began to perceive that they were exposed to the formidable risk of attack and invasion by the new German army, the short-sighted Czechs could not think without mortification or shame of their unjust and unwise treatment of the Slovak and other subject populations. Owing to the discontent of the subject populations, Czechoslovakia was frequently agitated by political troubles. Apprehensive for the security of the State, successive Czech governments bent all their energies to the task of uniting the heterogeneous constituents into a solid and irresistible whole. Their imprudence in neglecting to conciliate the disaffected populations stultified their efforts. Strangely lacking in statesmanship, they failed to perceive that the unity of a State must in the long run depend on the loyalty of its citizens. Oppression and persecution are not conducive to loyalty; and the Czech rulers committed the fatal mistake of oppressing and persecuting those very citizens whose

loyal collaboration was essential to the fulfilment of their aim.

The general staff of the Czech army was of opinion that the State industries would be more easily defended in the hilly regions of Slovakia than in Bohemia and Moravia. Moreover, these regions, rich in ores and timber, would be valuable sources of raw materials for the Czech war economy. The prevalence of this view was shown by the fact that the Czech arms industry in 1936-1938 built two large ammunition factories and an electric power station in the Váh valley, and bought up several Slovak mining-plants. The same considerations impelled the State to build two railways and several short roads of purely strategic importance. Unfortunately, these belated measures were of no avail: they could not alter the fundamental situation. The end was fast approaching. The humiliation of September, 1938, and the surrender of March, 1939, decided the fate of Czechoslovakia.

III

The Collapse of Czechoslovakia

EVENTS LEADING TO THE MUNICH AGREEMENT

"No people that has ever borne the torch of civilization has been willing, or even able, to recognize that the hour of relinquishing sovereignty has come."

JOHN BAGNELL BURY,
A History of Greece to the Death of Alexander the Great,
chap. xviii.

ADDRESSING a joint session of the two Houses of Congress on 2 April, 1917, President Wilson defined the motive that impelled the United States of America to support the cause of the Allies:

"The wish to protect against every selfish and autocratic power the fundamental principles of peace and justice and to bring about such an agreement amongst the really free and self-governing peoples of the world which endeavours to have these principles respected in the future."

No one would now seriously maintain that justice and humanity prevailed at Trianon; on the contrary, all dispassionate and impartial students of history agree in condemning a treaty born of vindictive malevolence and selfish ambition.

President Wilson enumerated his famous fourteen points, which he regarded as the essential conditions of a secure and lasting peace, in an address delivered to a joint session of the two Houses of Congress on 8 January, 1918. The Allies formally concurred in the principles enunciated by the President. But there is a wide difference between formal concurrence and actual practice. Take, for example, the tenth point: autonomous development of the peoples of Austria-Hungary.

Instead of ensuring the autonomous development of the peoples of Austria-Hungary, the Treaty of

Trianon dismembered the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The only State capable of maintaining the political and economic equilibrium of the Danubian Basin was thus recklessly destroyed. A strong and compact State in Central Europe would have been an effectual check on German aggression. The rape of Austria in March, 1938, and that of Czechoslovakia in March, 1939, were direct consequences of the imprudent decisions taken at the Peace Conference in 1919. The dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy opened the way to German expansion. The Berlin correspondent of the *London Times*, in a message published on 14 July, 1938, uttered a timely warning against German ambitions in Central and Eastern Europe:

"For, as it is explained, a wide economic area in Europe under German control is a military and economic necessity for Germany—military, because the naval agreement makes her helpless against blockade in time of war, and economic because of her increasing difficulty in selling manufactures for raw materials and foodstuffs in other markets of the world."

Addressing a joint session of the two Houses of Congress on 11 February, 1918, President Wilson laid down the following essential conditions of peace:

"First, that each part of the final settlement must be based upon the essential justice of that particular case and upon such adjustments as are most likely to bring a peace that will be permanent;

"Second, that peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game, even the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of power; but that

"Third, every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned, and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims amongst rival states; and

"Fourth, that all well defined national aspirations shall be accorded them without introducing new or perpetuating old elements of discord and antagonism that would be likely in time to break the peace of Europe and consequently the world."*

Had these four principles been put into practice at the Peace Conference in 1919, the situation would be very different in Europe today. Unhappily, they were disregarded. The Allies were too ready to believe those plausible politicians whose cynical indifference to truth they never dreamt of suspecting. Their credulity led them to be deceived by false information. The existing state of things was carefully concealed from them by suppression or distortion of material facts. Profoundly ignorant of Danubian affairs, they never thought of impugning the accuracy of the facts with which they had been supplied. The consequence was that the demands of the minorities were ignored: Magyars, Slovaks, and Ruthenians, were transferred to foreign nationality against their will. Having emphasized their wish to remain citizens of the Hungarian State, they protested against the arbitrary method of deciding so vital a question as their future citizenship without consulting their wishes or obtaining their consent.

The Czechoslovak Republic was founded on a sort of Procrustean hypothesis, to which facts were fitted by violent stretching or mutilation. Czechs and Slovaks are not one race. The argument, propounded by the Czechs with unremitting energy, that they are one race has been decisively refuted by competent ethnologists. Czech politicians deliberately misled the Peace Conference in 1919 and built the Czechoslovak Republic on false foundations. So erudite an authority on Danubian affairs as

* *President Wilson's Foreign Policy: Messages, Addresses, Papers, edited with Introduction and Notes by James Brown Scott* (New York, 1918), pp. 371-372.

Mr. C. A. Macartney wrote in his *Hungary and her Successors* :

"By patient and indefatigable propaganda they [*i.e.*, Professor Masaryk and his group] implanted their major postulates—the existence of a 'Czechoslovak nation' and the desire of the Slovak branch of it to form part of a Czechoslovak State—so firmly in the minds of the Allies that they were never seriously questioned at the Peace Conference."

The leading article, entitled *Problems for Settlement*, in the *London Times* for 3 June, 1938, dealt with the principle of self-determination. The writer considered that the rulers of Czechoslovakia had been wrong in denying the right of self-determination to the minorities. "In the past there has been too much rigidity in maintaining the *status quo* to a point at which only violence could alter it." The conclusion was reached that, if the Czechs would now agree to a plebiscite to determine the future of the Sudeten Germans and the other minorities, "the rulers of Czechoslovakia might in the long run be the gainers in having a homogeneous and contented people, still more numerous than the populations of Belgium or Holland, and twice as numerous as those of Denmark or Switzerland. If it was an injustice that these minorities should have been included in the new Republic, that injustice would be removed; and the neighbouring States which take a racial interest in their kinsmen would have to look after them themselves and would lose any sort of claim to interfere in the affairs of Czechoslovakia. It would be a drastic remedy for the present unrest, but something drastic may be needed."

The Times was right: strong measures were needed. The need for them would never have arisen if the Wilsonian principles had been conscientiously acted upon in 1919. *Sero sapiunt Phryges*.

It was unfortunate that the terms of reference of the special mission to Prague under Lord Runciman's distinguished leadership did not cover the Slovak question, which remained unsettled. The political distempers of the Czechoslovak State required extraordinary remedies. A remedy should have been applied first to the Slovak distemper: the less serious distempers could then have been remedied with comparative ease.

The Magyar and Sudeten German minorities were already actively collaborating with the Slovak People's party led by Andrew Hlinka. German money was poured into Sudetenland: some of it found its way even into the pockets of members of the Slovak People's party. Hlinka's influence was declining: he was no longer capable of counteracting the machinations of Tiso, Farkas, Durcánsky, Mach, and other unscrupulous intriguers, whose inordinate avarice and sordid rapacity impelled them to betray their country and to commit the fatal error of incurring substantial obligations to their future protectors. It is not surprising that the Germans, whose protection smacks of tyranny, now refuse to release them from their obligations. Their conduct, characterized throughout by a curious union of moral turpitude with political blundering, is the fundamental cause of the present plight of Slovakia and the Slovak people.

The delegates of the American Slovak League reached Slovakia in the summer of 1938. They made the voyage on a Polish ship to Gdynia, whence they proceeded to Slovakia. They brought with them the original Pittsburgh Convention bearing Masaryk's own signature, in order that its authenticity might be established in the face of Czech misrepresentations. Its authenticity established beyond question, they could then demand the fulfilment of all its provisions. Slovakia must be granted autonomy.

Dr. Peter Hlatko and his fellow delegates never suspected that the great meeting held at Presporok (Bratislava) on 5 June, 1938, at which they produced the original Pittsburgh Convention and demanded Slovak autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic, had been organized with the aid of German money. Its real object was not the attainment of Slovak autonomy but the disruption of the Czechoslovak Republic and the subjection of both the Czechs and the Slovaks to the ascendancy of an aggressive and predatory Germany.

Tiso, Durcánsky, Mach, and Farkas, were fully aware of the unscrupulous German aims. Though they were in the pay of the Czechs, they had no scruples about pursuing a course favourable to Germany. Their hypocritical professions of loyalty to the Slovak cause served to disguise the flagitious duplicity of their conduct.

Zealous for the freedom and independence of their country, loyal Slovaks resolutely shunned the venal and perfidious Tiso and his partisans, whose political transactions moved them to bitter resentment. But their disgust and indignation were of no avail: they were condemned to inaction and vassalage. Speaking on 5 June, 1938, of the need for autonomy, Hlinka truly said that the Slovak nation had not suffered so much under the Hungarians in a thousand years as it had under the Czechs in twenty. This was his political testament. He died in August, 1938, and the Slovak People's party was left without a leader.

By his will Hlinka directed that Sidor should be appointed to succeed him as leader of the party. But Tiso and a few clerical dabblers in politics contrived the suppression of the will. With the aid of money supplied by the Czechs matters were so arranged that Tiso himself, who had been a vice-president of the party, became its acting president,

and the election of a president was indefinitely postponed. Tiso then extorted money from the frightened Czechs, who had lost all sense of responsibility.

Meanwhile the party was distracted by factious squabbling. Durcánsky, Mach, Farkas, and Murgas, took the side of the Germans: Tiso, Sokol, and Sidor, took the side of the Czechs. Hitler's speech of 28 September, 1938, followed by the Munich Agreement, found the party hopelessly divided. In his speech Hitler employed the arguments of the Slovak autonomists and separatists in the hope of convincing the great Powers in particular and the world in general of Czechoslovakia's untenable position and of the need for a speedy solution of the Slovak question. It is readily admitted that there were grievances and offenders. Unfortunately, Hitler has an incurable propensity to take the law into his own hands. His methods of redressing grievances and punishing offenders are in flagrant defiance of the fundamental principles of morality and justice. They rather embroil matters than bring them to a satisfactory settlement. They alienate the sympathy of those who are striving to repair the persistent errors and injustices of the past. They finally lead to war. Having achieved much for Germany, Hitler could have chosen the career of a wise and beneficent ruler: yielding to an insatiable lust of glory and dominion, he chose the career of a criminal aggressor.

THE ŽILINA RESOLUTION

The new leaders of the Slovak People's party, working in concert with the Czech government in Prague, convened a political conference at Žilina on 6 October, 1938. According to its organizers, Tiso and his partisans, the purpose of this conference

was to enable leading Slovaks to discuss freely the vital problems of Slovakia and to reach positive decisions about them.

Tiso's real task, undertaken in collusion with Beneš, was to save Slovakia for the Czechs by falsely promising the Slovaks autonomy. It should here be noted that in October, 1938, the Slovaks, disillusioned by Czech perfidy, were implacably hostile to the proposal of autonomy within the reconstituted Republic of Czechoslovakia. A Polish or German solution would have been unacceptable to them. They were bent on exercising their right to determine their own polity by a plebiscite taken on the principle of a universal and secret ballot. It was their firm conviction that such a plebiscite could have only one result: union with Hungary on the basis of internal autonomy. How widely this conviction was held may be judged by the fact that in Slovakia even the former Czechoslovaks and the Czech settlers never hoped for anything else.

Unfortunately, the aim of the Slovaks was imperfectly understood in the neighbouring States. Only Hungary and Italy supported the proposal of a Slovak plebiscite; but even their support was languid and ineffectual. So dilatory and irresolute a policy gave the advantage to Tiso and his subaltern adventurers.

On 6 October, 1938, Slovak politicians assembled at Žilina. Intimidated by the presence of Czech armed gendarmes and soldiers, they dare not openly express their own convictions or those of the Slovak people, who were in favour of separation from Czechoslovakia and union with Hungary. They had to be content with a compromise, and passed a resolution that not only accepted the principle of national independence but also secured to the Slovak people the right, to be exercised by means of

a plebiscite at a later date, of deciding their own political future.

This was the substance of the resolution passed at the conference of Slovak politicians. It was received with moderate satisfaction by the Slovak people. The full text of the resolution was not immediately published. A special committee had been appointed to draft it; and this committee drafted a text in direct contradiction to the resolution passed at the conference.

The text of the resolution was identical with the text that Tiso and his partisans had brought ready-made from Prague. It stated that Slovakia and the Slovak people wished to remain within the Czechoslovak State on certain conditions and under a new political arrangement. In other words, the falsified resolution demanded nominal autonomy of the Czech government. This was the second falsification of a Slovak document perpetrated by the Czechs. The first was that of the Turč. Sv. Martin Declaration. Both were equally injurious to the Slovak cause.

Tiso and his associates did not publish the forged text of the resolution at Žilina. They took the night train for Prague, and on the following day presented the document to the Czech government, which at once appointed them ministers of the Slovak State. They then published the forged text in the Slovak Press, to the dismay of the whole nation.

This pretended autonomy, cunningly devised by the Czechs, was proclaimed by Tiso and his associates in the Press and at political meetings as a great national concession extorted from the niggardly Czech rulers.

ŽILINA AUTONOMY IN PRACTICE

In spite of many disappointments the idea of national independence was gaining a strong hold

upon Slovak public opinion. Recent political developments in Central Europe had helped to confirm the Slovaks in their hope. By October, 1938, the Poles had already settled the question of the Polish minorities in Czechoslovakia by effecting a military occupation of the Polish districts and annexing them to Poland. The question of the Magyar minorities had been settled in Vienna on 2 November, 1938, by the restoration to Hungary of the southern parts of Slovakia, in which Magyars predominate. Meanwhile the Czechs had granted nominal autonomy to Ruthenia, which, under the terms of the Peace Treaties, would have been entitled to full autonomy.

In Slovakia, however, no radical change was accomplished. Czech officials, gendarmes, and soldiers—in fact, all the Czechs that had settled there—remained in undisputed possession of their powers: they were still the real masters of the country. All that had happened was that Tiso and his partisans had been created ministers of State by the Czechs. Tiso himself received the office of Prime Minister. They had no pretensions to the name of statesman: ministerial offices were bestowed on them in recompense for their assiduous services to the Czechs. Though their lust of power was strong, their lust of money was stronger; and their betrayal of the Slovak nation gained for them the rewards of hard cash that they appreciated much more than the authority and dignity of ministerial office.

Impatient of political corruption and economic torpor, the Slovak people grew more and more restless and discontented. German influence then began to exert itself, first in Presporok (Bratislava) and then throughout Slovakia. It penetrated into Ruthenia, where the Czechs were encountering many administrative difficulties; for the Ruthenian leaders were openly declaring for separation from Czechoslovakia and union with Hungary. The Czech

authorities ordered the arrest and imprisonment of Andrew Bródy, who was one of the most popular Ruthenian leaders and had been appointed Prime Minister of Ruthenia by the Czechs themselves. Discontent and unrest throughout the Republic, and particularly in Slovakia, grew with so alarming a rapidity and assumed so formidable an aspect that Tiso and his partisans began to entertain serious doubts about the power of the Czechs and the stability of their rule.

The prevailing discontent would have made even resolute statesmen uneasy: Tiso and his ministerial colleagues were notoriously deficient in resolution and statesmanship. They therefore had recourse to the shameful expedient of directing the public vexation and indignation against the Hungarians, whom they absurdly accused of being responsible for all the troubles that the scandalous irregularity of their own conduct had brought upon the Slovak people. Rejecting with scorn these false and malicious accusations, reasonable Slovaks remained firm advocates of friendship with Hungary.

Perceiving that they had failed in their attempt to inflame the Slovaks against the Hungarians, Tiso and his partisans set themselves assiduously to cultivate friendship with the Germans, especially the Nazi usurpers in Vienna. Having betrayed the Slovaks to the Czechs, they proceeded to betray the Czechs to the Germans. Tiso's perfidy and hypocrisy degrade him to the level of a consummate rascal like Cardinal Portocarrero, Archbishop of Toledo, "a politician made out of an impious priest." "Such politicians," Macaulay justly observed, "are generally worse than the worst of the laity, more merciless than any ruffian that can be found in camps, more dishonest than any pettifogger who haunts the tribunals. The sanctity of their profession has an unsanctifying influence on them."

IV

The "Independence" of the Slovak State and the Tiso Government**THE BIRTH OF THE "INDEPENDENT" SLOVAK STATE**

"Nations may be guilty of a conduct that would render an individual infamous for ever; and yet carry their heads high, talk of their glory, and despise their neighbours."

WILLIAM COWPER in a letter, dated 26 January, 1783, to the Rev. John Newton.

THE events of March, 1939, constituted a turning-point in the history of the Slovak nation. As everyone still retains a vivid recollection of them, it is proposed here to review them only briefly.

The Munich Agreement and the Vienna arbitral award did not finally solve the problem of the minorities in Czechoslovakia. In Bohemia and Moravia there were still German minorities, which refused to submit to the rule of the Czech majority. The situation in Slovakia and Ruthenia also was very unsettled. Antipathy between the Czechs and the German minorities became so bitter that it could not but vent itself sooner or later in some violent explosion. The aversion with which the Slovaks regarded the Czechs was equalled by the distrust and hatred with which they regarded the Tiso government kept in power by the Czechs. No improvement in their relations followed the granting of nominal autonomy to the Slovaks; on the contrary, things fast went from bad to worse.

The Czechs learnt that Tiso and his partisans were conducting secret negotiations with the Germans, and soon perceived their growing reluctance to obey orders from Prague. Moreover, the discontent of the Slovak population threatened to break out into open rebellion. A Slovak politician of adamant will was needed to suppress the prevalent disaffection.

The Sirovy government in Prague peremptorily dismissed Tiso from office. An event then happened that was a bitter disappointment to the Slovak people. Charles Sidor, the man in whom Slovak hopes were confidently reposed, the man regarded as the leader on whom Father Hlinka's mantle had fallen, was appointed by the Czechs to succeed Tiso. He was sent to Presporok (Bratislava) as Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, at the head of a strong military and police force, with instructions to suppress rebellion in Slovakia.

It was no fault of Sidor's that he was never called upon to assume the office of Prime Minister and to suppress by force the struggle of the Slovak nation for freedom. He was saved by Hitler's sudden move from the infamy of having to perform what he had undertaken.

Wounded pride impelled Tiso, who had been dismissed from office and was generally hated, to betray his country and, in the hope of regaining his lost power, to make a personal appeal for help to Hitler. To the astonishment and mortification of the Slovaks, Hitler complied with his appeal. Slovak patience was now exhausted: the national spirit rose high against the corrupt and perfidious priest whose misgovernment had brought Slovakia to the verge of ruin.

German troops marched into Bohemia and Moravia on 14 March, 1939. The Czechoslovak Republic ceased to exist: the historical Bohemian provinces became a German protectorate. The reason for Tiso's reinstatement in the office of Prime Minister of Slovakia was disclosed soon afterwards.

On their return from Berlin on 14 March, 1939, Tiso and his partisans unexpectedly convoked the Slovak Parliament of sixty-one members and required them to pass without delay a resolution declaring that Slovakia had dissolved its union with Bohemia

and Moravia and become an independent State. There was no time for deliberation. Tiso broadly hinted that serious consequences would follow the refusal of the Slovak Parliament to pass the resolution at once. He gave the deputies to understand that, if they dared to oppose the resolution, effectual measures would be taken to break their refractory spirit.

Having taken counsel among themselves, the deputies came to the conclusion that they needed at least two or three days to think the matter over. They were, they said, averse from taking a rash decision, and deemed it wiser to declare for self-determination and then decide calmly what course to pursue. They were anxious that the Slovak people themselves should have the opportunity of deciding their future. But Tiso and his colleagues would not have it. They told the deputies that the alien overlord in Berlin demanded an immediate answer. The deputies were thus tricked and browbeaten into passing that fatal resolution by which the Slovak Parliament declared Slovakia to be free and independent of Czechoslovakia. Having gained nominal independence, Slovakia surrendered its real independence to Germany, and fell a helpless victim to that German tyranny from which it is the aim of the Allied Powers in the present conflict to emancipate Poland, Bohemia, and Austria.

THE "INDEPENDENT" SLOVAK STATE BECOMES A "PROTECTORATE"

Three days after the establishment of the nominally independent Slovak State a momentous turn of events took the nation by surprise. On 16 March, 1939, Tiso sent the following telegram to Hitler :

" Full of confidence in the Leader and Chancellor of the Great German Reich, the Slovak nation places itself under your protection. The Slovak State begs you to undertake its protection."

Hitler promptly returned an affirmative answer :

" I have received your telegram of yesterday and herewith undertake to protect the Slovak State."

On the same day German troops poured into Western Slovakia, completely occupying that province ; and on 23 March Slovakia concluded an agreement regulating its relations with the German Reich. The agreement provided that Germany should protect Slovakia's political independence and territorial integrity. To facilitate the discharge of this provision the part of Slovakia lying west of the river Váh was to be placed under German military control. The Slovak army was to be organized in consultation with the German military authorities. Slovak foreign policy was to be directed by the German government. The agreement was to remain in force for twenty-five years, but might be prolonged by the contracting parties before the expiration of that term.

It will be seen that the agreement vested the German civil and military authorities with extensive and formidable powers over the Slovak State, which became in effect, though not in name, a province of Germany. Nominally independent, it is really subservient to the imperious will of Hitler, who has transformed it into a ready instrument of his policy of fraud and violence. This subservience is profoundly affecting the whole organization of the State. In every department Germany now decides all important questions.

These facts conclusively prove that the Slovak Council was right in insisting that the resolution passed by the Slovak Parliament on 14 March, 1939, could not reasonably be interpreted to mean that the

Slovak nation was free to exercise its right of self-determination, and was therefore secure against foreign encroachments. In point of fact, the resolution effectually deprived Slovakia of its national independence.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TISO GOVERNMENT

It may be argued that the action of the Slovak rulers was simply a matter of political expediency, and no other course was open to them under the circumstances. Unfortunately, this argument is not borne out by the facts. In any case, it does not exonerate them from the reproach of having exposed their country to the gravest dangers for considerations of material gain and personal advancement. They could not resist the temptation, incident to all impecunious adventurers, to gratify their vulgar cupidity and inordinate ambition at the expense of the honour and security of their country.

The politician that accepts the responsibility of governing a country is not justified in repudiating it at a critical conjuncture on the ground that his calculations have proved wrong and adventitious circumstances and influences have contributed to the defeat of his plans. No politician is obliged to bear the arduous and thankless part of a leader. If he is reluctant to take responsibility for a *turpis causa*, no one can force him to do so: he is at liberty to retire from politics. But, if he chooses to bear the part of a leader, he must be prepared to take the whole burden of responsibility on his shoulders. This applies to Tiso.

SLOVAKIA UNDER TISO

(a) Politics

It is plain that the policy of Tiso and his colleagues can end only in the ruin of Slovakia. Their misgovernment has brought a prosperous country into

a state of corruption, spoliation, and persecution. Slovakia is now a hotbed of the rankest abuses, which they make no serious effort to check or eradicate. They connive at the embezzlement of public funds and the plunder of private property; nor is their failure to restrain the excesses of persecution less scandalous and reprehensible.

Magyars and Jews are persecuted with a systematic brutality reminiscent of the darkest periods of the Middle Ages. Innocent Slovaks are confined in concentration camps for long terms and there subjected to flagrant indignities and revolting tortures. The Slovak Lutherans are persecuted on the pretext that they took the side of the Czechs. This sweeping accusation is unfounded. On the other hand, venal sycophants of the Czechs and implacable opponents of Slovak autonomy, professing themselves devout Catholics, are readily admitted to a faction whose policy is to plunder, oppress, and insult the Slovak people.

Superfluous offices in the public services are created with the sole object of providing lucrative sinecures for the relatives of Tiso and his colleagues. Honourable men, feeling the strongest indignation and disgust, are powerless to restrain these abuses; for Tiso and his colleagues have taken effectual measures to silence those that venture to denounce their corrupt and cruel maladministration and to complain of the many injustices under which the nation labours. Anyone that presumes to criticize the ruling powers soon finds himself in close confinement.

Slovak politics are in bad case. Rival loyalties or parties are no longer tolerated. The so-called one-party system and the censorship of the Press are unfavourable to the growth of a sound public opinion, which is the foundation of politics in any effective sense.

The election of deputies is conducted in an arbitrary and irregular manner. The government compiles a list of names, against which the electors put either *Yes* as a sign of acceptance or *No* as a sign of rejection; but, even if the great majority of the electors record negative votes, it by no means signifies that the list presented by the government has been rejected. Only the candidates enumerated on this list can be elected, since no other list is ever published at elections.

A heavy poll of negative votes at most merely limits the number of deputies elected; for under the Slovak constitution the number of deputies is not fixed in advance, but may be larger or smaller according to the number of affirmative votes cast. At present the Slovak Parliament consists of sixty-one members: it may consist of eighty in the near future and of forty in the distant future. Under such an electoral system it is easy to regulate the number of affirmative or negative votes. That would not be a serious abuse in a country where the government was administered by wise and beneficent rulers; but it is a national disaster when it establishes and perpetuates the rule of a cabal of adventurers.

(b) *Economics*

The economic outlook is just as dreary and hopeless. For a thousand years Slovakia took its due place in the economic organization of the Danubian Basin. It formed a part of the Kingdom of Hungary, a compact geographical and economic unit watered by the Danube and defended by the natural bulwark of the Carpathians. This unit was broken up by the Treaty of Trianon. Trade between its dismembered parts was crippled. The economic disadvantages of this situation are still felt not only by the

Hungarians but also, and even more acutely, by the Slovaks.

The Czechs ruined most of the Slovak industries, and made no attempt to repair the loss by developing agriculture and increasing the production of raw materials. In the twenty years of Czech rule new economic connexions were established between Slovakia and the historical Bohemian provinces. The sudden transformation of Slovakia into a nominally independent State having its own customs frontiers either damaged or destroyed these connexions, with the result that today the balance between production and consumption and between exports and imports is considerably disturbed and the stability of economic conditions is fundamentally shaken.

Imports of raw materials from countries with stable currencies have practically ceased; for Slovakia cannot obtain foreign exchange, and therefore cannot pay for goods in foreign countries where there are no currency restrictions. Trade with these countries has come to a standstill. Slovakia has been drawn into the German economic orbit. The war has aggravated the difficulties incident to economic dependence on Germany. The countries of South-East Europe with controlled currencies, such as Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Bulgaria, do not know what to buy from Slovakia; for each of them has adequate supplies of wood and cellulose, and Slovakia has hardly anything else to export.

It is true that Germany and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia offer potential markets for Slovak wood and cellulose. Unfortunately, these countries have no means of paying Slovakia: they have hardly any gold or foreign exchange. Owing to the exigencies of the war they have nothing to spare in the way of industrial products and raw materials, with the possible exception of coal.

Slovakia needs raw materials—cotton, rubber, wool, and all kinds of ore—for its factories; but they are procurable only in countries with free currencies. Neither Germany nor the Protectorate can supply any of these materials. It is sheer madness to cut down the forests of Slovakia and export the timber—the only national resource of value—to Germany and the Protectorate, where there is a substantial demand for timber, but no means of paying for it. This was why, within six months of the establishment of the nominally independent Slovak State, the clearing-account between Slovakia and the Protectorate showed a balance of 600,000,000 Slovak crowns in favour of Slovakia. The position of Slovak trade with Germany is much the same.

The real position may be thus stated. Slovak trade with Germany and the Protectorate shows a large excess of exports, for which payment has not been made. The forests are being cut down and the timber is being exported, but the Slovak owners and exporters are not receiving any money in exchange. Lacking reserves of capital, they are being forced to close down their saw-mills. It is obvious that things cannot go on in this way for long. A small country like Slovakia will very soon be involved in economic ruin.

The only country able to absorb and pay for all exports from Slovakia is Hungary. Hungary could supply Slovakia with practically everything it needs: raw materials, foodstuffs, textiles, leather, cattle, lard, grain, fodder, etc. Raw materials that can be produced only by countries with stable currencies might be supplied by Hungary, which can pay for them in exports. Such an arrangement cannot be instituted on the basis of a mere commercial treaty: improved and closer political relations also are necessary. The present leaders of Slovakia show no willingness to cultivate such relations. They want

power and money; and they would rather gratify their selfish ambition than try to extricate their country from its serious economic and political embarrassments.

According to the estimates of the Slovak government, the deficit in the State budget is likely to be a permanent one. For the present this deficit is secured by loans. But the Slovak people, even under official pressure, show little disposition to subscribe these loans; for they have no guarantee when, by whom, and in what currency, the loans will be repaid. Failing to secure the budgetary deficit by normal methods, the Slovak government had to resort to abnormal ones. It was forced to adopt the expedient of printing bank-notes.

The question of the new currency occupies a prominent place in the affairs of Slovakia. It must be admitted that at the outset the situation was full of dangers and difficulties; for a new financial system had to be built up and a new monetary unit—the Slovak crown, which corresponded in every respect to the Czechoslovak crown—had to be introduced. In every respect? No, not quite; for the Czechoslovak crown was a gold coin with a gold and foreign-exchange cover fixed by law, which therefore possessed an intrinsic value. The case of the Slovak crown is different.

The Slovak National Bank possesses neither gold nor foreign exchange. At the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Republic the Czechs refused to hand over to the Slovaks their share of the gold held by the joint bank of issue unless the Slovaks agreed to shoulder a proportionate share of the national debt. The Czechs computed the amount of this share at 10,000,000,000 or 12,000,000,000 Slovak crowns. The Czechs have recently demanded a further 7,000,000,000 Slovak crowns in lieu of compensation paid to the Czech officials driven out of Slovakia.

These questions are still unsettled, and are likely to remain so for some time. The Czech gold reserve is the subject of many rumours, which lead the Slovaks to believe that the Czechs will be obliged to use the gold to settle their accounts with Germany, or may have already been obliged to use it for this purpose.

The truth is that the new Slovak currency was issued without any cover, and no cover for it has been obtained since. The government has thus contrived to produce a certain redundancy of money, which relieves the economic situation for the present. But, this redundancy being in the nature of an inflation, the issue of the new currency spells ruin to the future finances of the State. An accumulation of capital or of savings-bank deposits is obviously out of the question.

It is worth considering the effect of these circumstances on the economic position of the Slovak people.

First, unemployment has considerably increased. The standard of living has declined owing to a heavy fall in incomes and a sharp rise in prices. Tiso and his colleagues try to conceal the growth of unemployment by sending tens of thousands of workers to Germany. There are at present more than 100,000 agricultural and 30,000 industrial Slovak workers in Germany. As they are not allowed to send their wages home, the Slovak National Bank and the German government have come to an arrangement by which the Bank is obliged to pay the wages to the workers' families in Slovak crowns. This means a fresh issue of bank-notes.

The peculiar character of Slovak foreign trade has made it impossible to procure the necessary raw materials and foodstuffs from foreign countries. This in its turn has been responsible for a general rise in prices, which cannot be controlled merely by official regulations. There is a shortage of many articles in every-day use: lard, soap, and textiles

are not to be had at all. Coffee, tea, and chocolate are vanished luxuries.

While Tiso and his colleagues are amassing large private fortunes, the distress of the impoverished Slovak people is becoming every day more acute. Callously indifferent to the misery that their misgovernment is inflicting on their fellow countrymen, they are not making the least effort to devise a plan for the restoration of Slovak industry and commerce. Their attention is occupied with costly and senseless luxuries, in which they lavish money extorted from timorous Slovaks.

The Slovaks long for order and security. Unfortunately, this longing is not shared by Tiso and his colleagues, whose aim is to fish in troubled waters. Destitute of moral principle, they have no scruples about indulging that passion for money which often characterizes hard-hearted men suddenly raised to power. What is it to them if meanwhile the people suffer bitter hardships and privations?

DETAILS OF THE POLITICAL RECORD OF THE SLOVAK PEOPLE'S PARTY

As a detailed biography of Joseph Tiso would here be out of place, it is proposed to furnish a succinct account of the most important events of his political career.

In 1918 he was teaching Scripture in a school at Nitra. Professing himself a fervent Magyar patriot, he naturally objected to being reminded of his Slovak origin. He was an active member of the Magyar Cultural Society of Upper Hungary; and it should in all fairness be stated that he discharged his duties with commendable thoroughness and assiduity, sometimes, perhaps, with an excess of zeal.

In the intervals between lessons at school, he would not allow his Slovak pupils to speak to each

other in their native tongue. On one occasion in the autumn of 1918 he rebuked some young Slovak offenders: "Speak Hungarian: you must not speak Slovak here." This was the Tiso of 1918: there are still many living witnesses to the incident.

After the dismemberment of Hungary Tiso conformed to the prevailing fashion by professing himself an equally fervent Slovak patriot. He joined the political party led by Andrew Hlinka, whom he flattered so adroitly that his flattery at last bore substantial fruit: in 1925 Hlinka contrived his election to the Czechoslovak National Assembly. Here Tiso perpetrated his second apostasy. Utterly unscrupulous and insensible of shame, he betrayed the Slovak People's party by adopting Czechoslovakism.

After the parliamentary elections of 1925, at which the Slovak People's party won a resounding majority in Slovakia, the Czechs and Czechoslovaks quickly perceived that something must be done to appease the party, which had become altogether unmanageable. Prolonged negotiations resulted in a reform of the provincial administration. Specious promises were held out to the Slovak People's party in the hope of inducing some of its politicians to join the government. The negotiator for the Czechs was Tiso, whom they later appointed Minister of Public Health. The transaction was concluded in 1927, the Czechs having been represented by their political agent, Dr. Joseph Kállay, a former Minister Plenipotentiary of Administration in Slovakia.

Kállay, who had known them in the past, was aware that some of the members of the Slovak People's party were open to bribery. He therefore chose three of the most corrupt to be ministers: Tiso, Gazik, and—later—Labay. Tiso and Gazik were rewarded for their betrayal of Slovak interests with grants of land taken from Magyar landowners

in Slovakia under the provisions of the Czechoslovak land reform. Gazik and Labay were given grants of land and made notaries public.

The president of the party, Andrew Hlinka, was induced to countenance the betrayal and to relinquish—at least for a time—the idea of autonomy. The Czechs achieved their purpose by paying 12,000,000 Czech crowns to save the Slovak People's Bank in Ružomberok from ruin. This was the bribe received for betraying the cause of autonomy.

These dishonourable dealings continued for less than a year. Tired of being persistently blackmailed by politicians of the Slovak People's party, the Czechs at length decided that, since the party had already compromised itself in the eyes of the Slovak people by renouncing all thought of autonomy and collaborating with the government, it could now be discarded without incurring serious political risks. At any rate, this was the conclusion they drew from the results of the municipal elections held in the meantime. The party had lost its political status: its candidates polled only half the votes they had polled at previous elections. It was evident that the people knew what the politicians of the party were doing; and the Czechs took good care to keep them fully informed.

At this conjuncture the notorious Tuka case produced great excitement throughout the country. Professor Béla Tuka, vice-president of the party and editor-in-chief of the *Slovak*, refused to tolerate corruption and to acquiesce in a policy that meant enriching a few individuals and abandoning the struggle for autonomy. He raised his standard in the cause of autonomy. He revived the question of the Turč. Sv. Martin Declaration and the secret clause. It has already been related how the Czechs drove him out of public life within a year of his

renewing the struggle for autonomy. But his efforts were not in vain.

One important achievement stands to Tuka's credit: the representatives of the Slovak People's party were expelled from the government. The party then went into opposition and resumed the struggle for autonomy. Its corrupt members hurriedly resigned their lucrative offices and retired to the management of their illegally acquired estates. It should here be noted that such estates were bestowed not only on the ministers but also on many deputies and senators belonging to the Slovak People's party, especially those who had betrayed Tuka and handed him over to the Czech authorities. Those who were rewarded with estates included Ravasz, Durcánsky, Juriga, and Gazik.

Tiso was one of the ministers compelled to resign. He retired with handsomely filled pockets from the Ministry of Public Health. During his brief tenure of office he had sold all the Slovak chemists' licences available and issued some new ones to Jews, who paid fabulous prices for them. The price of a licence varied from 50,000 to 200,000 Czech crowns. From the time of these discreditable transactions he was entirely in the hands of the Czechs.

During the Tuka trial Tiso's demeanour was cautious and circumspect, and even excited suspicion. It was already known that he was the paid confidential agent of the Czechs in the Slovak People's party, and was betraying all its secrets to his masters. He performed this unenviable function till the final collapse of the Republic. It has already been related how, when Beneš and the Republic were in difficulties, Tiso did not hesitate to betray them in their turn to his new masters, the Germans.

Tiso, the Magyarizing priest of old, now encourages certain Slovak extremists in ferocious and senseless

propaganda against Hungary, propaganda detrimental to the interests of the Slovaks themselves. This subversive activity by no means exhausts his capacity for mischief.

Having received from Slovak diplomatists reports to the effect that Germany cannot possibly win the present war, he is racking his wits to contrive means of emancipating Slovakia from German protection. Behind the backs of his protectors he is now working in close concert with those Czech politicians who favour the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic as originally constituted. The priest that implored German protection from the Czechs is now intriguing with the Czechs against the Germans.

Tiso gives the Czechs to understand that acceptance of a German protectorate and collaboration with the Germans are temporary expedients, necessitated by stress of circumstances, but not to be taken seriously. He would have them believe that his most cherished desire is the rehabilitation of Beneš and the Republic. A like duplicity characterizes his relations with Hungary and Soviet Russia. His cant about Slav brotherhood excites disgust and suspicion in the Slovak mind. Telegrams paying hypocritical homage to Kalinin and Molotov were recently dispatched in the name of the Slovak nation. They were of a piece with Hitler's notorious telegram of congratulation to Stalin on his sixtieth birthday.

It would be instructive to know how Tiso, a Catholic priest, thinks to reconcile his adulation of the impious rulers of Soviet Russia with that adamant loyalty to Christ which is the first duty of a true Christian. It is pertinent to ask why a professed servant of Christ should lavish fair words on a band of godless fanatics, whose avowed aim is the destruction of Christianity and who boast with ostentatious insolence of their subversive intrigues against the constituted order of things. It is hard

to understand and impossible to justify the conduct of a Catholic priest who stoops to abject dependence on the will of the German Chancellor, guilty not only of the crime of systematically persecuting the Catholic Church* but also of the blackest crime that stains the history of modern Europe, the fourth partition of Catholic Poland.

These facts all go to prove that Tiso and his colleagues have no constructive and consistent political aims, but are impelled by base and selfish motives. Personal ambition is more to them than the ideal of universal freedom: they care nothing for "that fairest earthly fame, the fame of Freedom," of which Robert Bridges wrote with serene and affecting beauty of thought and phrase in the memorable preface to *The Spirit of Man*. They are indifferent whether Germany or the Allied Powers win the present war: their one and only concern is to be on the right side at the right time. A Christian priest so unmindful of Christian precepts as Father Tiso may appropriately be reminded of his Master's rebuke to the Pharisees: *He that is not with me is against me*.

When the Slovaks reproach the Germans with having entrusted the government of Slovakia to a junto of unprincipled adventurers, the Germans protest that they had every intention of making Slovakia politically independent, and represent to the Slovaks the importance of choosing their own government. These disingenuous explanations do not satisfy the Slovaks. The Germans well know that Tiso owes his political position to their interference and holds it during their pleasure. They foisted him on the Slovak nation, which is at present powerless to overthrow his disreputable government.

* See *National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church*, by N. Micklem (Oxford University Press), and *The Persecution of the Church in Germany*, by Pope Pius XI (Catholic Truth Society).

They must therefore be held ultimately responsible for the political and financial evils that now afflict the Slovak State.

LEAVING THE SINKING SHIP

That Tiso and his colleagues have no faith in the stability of the nominally independent Slovak State and in the permanence of their own rule is proved by the fact, well known in Slovakia, that he and the Durcánsky family, assisted by several Jewish business men, have already transferred much of their wealth to foreign countries. He evidently considers the chosen currencies safer than the Slovak crown or the German mark. Like transactions have been negotiated by Imre Karvas, the president of the Slovak National Bank.

Disdaining the mean artifices of perfidy and fraud, some prominent Slovaks have fled from Slovakia. General Rudolf Viest, commander-in-chief of the Slovak army, and several of his officers fled to Hungary at the outbreak of the Germano-Polish war. Ladislaus Szathmáry, a former Slovak Minister to Poland, refused allegiance to Tiso and his colleagues. Speaking on the Polish wireless, he publicly stigmatized them as fratricides for their despicable behaviour towards the Polish nation. The Slovak consuls-general and their official staffs in London and Paris adopted the same attitude. Peter Pridavok, head of the Slovak Press Department, and John Pauliny Tóth, a Presporok lawyer, were two well-known fugitives. Catlos, Minister of War, who at first refused to give the order for mobilization against Poland, could hardly be persuaded to return from Bardejov on the Polish frontier, whence he had intended to seek refuge abroad.

These men had all been supporters of the Tiso government. Its opponents now number nine out of

every ten Slovaks. Opposition is growing stronger every day among the Slovak Catholic clergy; for they consider Tiso's policy detrimental to the interests of the Catholic Church. They entertain serious doubts of his ever having been decorated by the German government in recognition of his work for the Catholic Church in Slovakia.

Conclusion

THE Slovak Council, zealous for the rights and interests of the Slovak nation, considers it a national duty to publish an accurate and impartial account of the present state of affairs in Slovakia. Its disclosures cannot but outrage the moral sense of mankind. The establishment of a better order not only in Slovakia but also throughout Central and Eastern Europe depends in the last resort on the downfall of Hitler and Stalin. The struggle to overthrow them will be long and arduous; but they will finally be overwhelmed in that tremendous ruin which is the ineluctable fate of all tyrants and oppressors. Disgust and indignation are excited by the barbarities perpetrated in Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Slovakia, Poland, Russia, and Finland: but, while evil forces are at work and national hatreds are inflamed, it is the truest wisdom to reflect on the dignity of human suffering and the power of human love. Let St. Paul's noble exhortation be taken to heart: *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

An attempt has been made, within the limits imposed by a short pamphlet, to give a clear account of the Slovak nation in the three stages of its historical development: first in old Hungary, then in the Czechoslovak State, and finally in the nominally independent Slovak State. This is intended to be not propaganda but an unbiassed statement of facts, from which the following conclusions may be drawn:

- (1) For more than a thousand years the Slovaks have been settled in the Danubian

Basin, where, protected by the Carpathians, they have lived at peace with their neighbours. No serious conflict has ever arisen between them and the Hungarians. Their strained relations at the turn of the nineteenth century were primarily due to disagreements about minority education and the use of the Slovak language, and could easily have been adjusted with a little mutual goodwill.

(2) In the past the Slovaks have never entertained the idea of separation either from the Hungarian State or from the compact geographical and economic unit of the Carpathian Basin. For within this unit practically all their economic and political interests can be secured.

(3) The Treaty of Trianon arbitrarily separated the Slovaks from the ancient Kingdom of Hungary and annexed them to the newly founded Republic of Czechoslovakia, which, after an uneasy existence of twenty years, proved itself incapable of preserving, under the pressure of hostile influences, its political independence and territorial integrity. Hitler exploited its inherent political weaknesses and thereby accelerated its disintegration and collapse: he himself was not responsible for those weaknesses. Unfortunately, foolish and obstinate Czech politicians played into the hands of Hitler and his agents. However, Czech folly and obstinacy were no justification for German rapacity and dishonour. The German appetite is insatiable: even if the Czechs had ruled their heterogeneous and polyglot State with exemplary wisdom and moderation, the Germans would no doubt have taken the same aggressive course. Moreover, it is surprising that the Germans, morbidly sensitive on the point of

their national honour, should have no scruples about repeatedly dishonouring their pledges.

(4) The nominally independent Slovak State was not proclaimed by the will of the Slovak people: it was the result of extraordinary political conditions in Central Europe, and its purpose is to serve political interests that have nothing to do with the Slovaks. The new Slovak government is a serviceable tool in the hands of the Nazi rulers of Germany.

(5) The right of self-determination has been denied to the Slovak people. The Turč. Sv. Martin Declaration; the Treaty of Trianon (1919), concluded without the participation of Slovak representatives in the preliminary negotiations; the ten years' Pact of Co-operation with the Czechs (1919-1928); the falsification of the Žilina Resolution on 6 October, 1938; the proclamation of the nominally independent Slovak State on 14 March, 1939: all these political expedients were contrived to prevent the Slovak people from exercising their right of self-determination. But they will never renounce this imprescriptible right.

The Slovak Council makes no secret of its opinion that the interests of the Slovak nation would be best served by the union of Slovakia with Hungary. Preferring reason to anger and persuasion to invective, the Slovak Council has tried to present its case clearly and temperately. A scrupulous regard to the limits prescribed by good sense and good taste has been consistently observed. The opposition of hostile and reluctant minds can be effectually overcome only by arguments conducted with a due attention to logic and couched in language of studied moderation. Convinced that all arguments are the more persuasive for the restraint with

which they are urged, the Slovak Council has been at pains to eschew that rancour and impudence which have come to be regarded as the natural concomitants of political controversy. To overwhelm opponents with execration and invective is hardly a judicious method of promoting a cherished cause or of inducing them to renounce their prejudices.

Europe is distracted by a war between Nazi Germany, bent on the subjugation of the whole civilized world, and the Allied Powers, bent on the destruction of the whole Nazi system. In a masterly pamphlet on *National Socialism and Christianity** Dr. Micklem, Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, reminds his readers that, according to the Nazi belief, "it is the God-given task and destiny of Germans to dominate the world." Dr. Goebbels obligingly confirmed Dr. Micklem's reminder by declaring in a speech delivered on 19 January, 1940, that there never was a time when Germany had such splendid prospects of achieving a dominating position in the world. In his Message to Congress on 3 January, 1940, President Roosevelt uttered a timely warning: "We must look ahead and see the kind of lives our children would have to lead if a large part of the rest of the world was compelled to worship a god imposed by a military ruler or was forbidden to worship God at all."

The invasion of Poland—the immediate cause of the present conflict—has demonstrated without a shadow of doubt that the war must be vigorously prosecuted against the Germans till a proper reduction of their exorbitant power is accomplished and they are incapacitated from putting their aggressive designs into execution and encroaching on the rights of independent nations. Drunk with victory, they display an insufferable arrogance. Nothing but a succession of military reverses will cure them

* *Oxford Pamphlets on World Affairs*, No. 18.

of the mischievous delusion that they are a race born for conquest and dominion. This evil must be met by force. "Thus force," Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, observed in his speech at Oxford on 27 February, 1940, "by resisting the destructive power of evil and guarding the field in which good can work, can render positive service which can be given in no other way." German military reverses will be really blessings in the guise of disasters; for the final defeat that they will bring will prove in the long run to be the salvation of Germany and the world. If the happiness of mankind and the integrity of civilization are to be effectually secured, Germany must be emancipated from the tyranny of the infamous Nazi system. It is true to say that Germany has no hope but in the downfall of its present rulers. The policy of fraud and violence pursued by a junto of cynical and perfidious adventurers is fundamentally opposed to the real interests of Germany in particular and the world in general.

The Slovak Council shares the interest and sympathy with which the United States of America are following the course of the war waged by the Allied Powers for the freedom and independence of small nations. Serenely confident that the Allied cause will prevail, the Council cherishes the hope that, when the time is ripe for a general settlement of European problems, the claims of Slovakia will receive due consideration. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the regency of Admiral Horthy, head of the Hungarian State, the *London Times* (2 March, 1940) published an article in appreciation of his noble and chivalrous character and of his wise and beneficent rule. In the course of the article it was stated: "There was general agreement at the Munich Conference that the part of Slovakia which was inhabited by Magyars should properly be returned to Hungary." This sympathetic remark

strengthens the hope that, when hostilities are ended, the Allied Powers will be disposed to concur in a plan for the voluntary union of all the Slovak territories with Hungary.

It is generally believed that, at the invitation of the Allied Powers, the United States of America will take a decisive part in the negotiations for restoring peace to Europe. In his Message to Congress on 3 January, 1940, President Roosevelt declared that "in almost every nation in the world today there is a true public belief that the United States has been, and will continue to be, a potent and active factor in seeking the re-establishment of world peace." This memorandum will amply fulfil its purpose if it succeeds in persuading American statesmen and diplomatists to exert their powerful influence in support of the Slovak claims.

The problems of the Danubian Basin are doubtless being fully considered by the Allied Powers in preparing their plans for a final settlement in Europe. There is no presumptuous intention in expressing the hope that, if the United States of America directly participate with the Allied Powers in the work of pacification and reconstruction, they will give their voice for adjusting the Slovak question in accordance with the proposals submitted in this memorandum. The Slovak Council is confident that, if the interests of Slovakia were committed to the care of the American negotiators at the Peace Conference, no effort would be spared to give the Slovaks a fair hearing. It is inconceivable that the Conference, having thoroughly and impartially examined the Slovak case, would refuse to satisfy claims grounded in historical tradition and political justice. Their satisfaction would conduce to a lasting peace in the Danubian Basin and win the deep gratitude and devoted friendship of the Slovak people.

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